

# **The Russian Federation and the Conflicts in Former Yugoslavia, 1992 – 1995**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis examines the evolution of Russian policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts from the start of 1992, when the Russian Federation became an independent state, to the Dayton Accords that ended the Bosnian conflict in December 1995.

In Part I, I discuss rival international relations theories in the post-Cold War world and apply them to the debate over foreign policy in Russia and Russian perceptions of the Yugoslav conflicts.

Part II examines the evolution of Russian policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts until the end of 1993. January to autumn 1992 was the 'liberal internationalist' phase of Russian policy, when the government promoted co-operation with the West in order to achieve a settlement of the Yugoslav conflicts, and a domestic backlash put pressure on the government to adjust its approach. A transitional phase followed, from autumn 1992 to the end of 1993, during which the government developed a more assertive great power policy based on relative domestic consensus.

Part III shows this neo-realist policy in action. Russian policy makers used the Sarajevo crisis of February 1994 to demonstrate Russia's great power status. They also sought to prevent developments considered to be harmful to Russia's national interests, in particular military action by NATO against the Bosnian Serbs. For a period, other powers recognised that Russian opinions must be taken into account. But in summer 1995, Western policy makers ignored Russian objections and Russia played a secondary role in achieving a peace settlement.

Russian policy makers attempted to use the Yugoslav conflict to demonstrate Russia's great power status and its independence from the West, but Russia lacked the power and influence for the policy to be effective. Russian policy contributed to the failure of the 'international community' to achieve a just settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and added to the divisions developing between Russia and the West.

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## List of abbreviations

<b>CIS</b>	<b>Commonwealth of Independent States</b>
<b>CPD</b>	<b>Congress of People's Deputies</b>
<b>CPRF</b>	<b>Communist Party of the Russian Federation</b>
<b>CSCE</b>	<b>Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe</b>
<b>EC</b>	<b>European Community</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>FRY</b>	<b>Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</b>
<b>ICFY</b>	<b>International Conference on Former Yugoslavia</b>
<b>IFOR</b>	<b>Implementation Force</b>
<b>JNA</b>	<b>Yugoslav People's Army</b>
<b>LDPR</b>	<b>Liberal Democratic Party of Russia</b>
<b>MFA</b>	<b>Ministry of Foreign Affairs [in Russian, MID = Ministerstvo inostrannykh del]</b>
<b>MFER</b>	<b>Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations</b>
<b>MND</b>	<b>Multinational Division (IFOR)</b>
<b>NAC</b>	<b>North Atlantic Council</b>
<b>NACC</b>	<b>North Atlantic Co-operation Council</b>
<b>NATO</b>	<b>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</b>
<b>OSCE</b>	<b>Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe</b>
<b>PfP</b>	<b>Partnership for Peace</b>
<b>RAN</b>	<b>Russian Academy of Sciences</b>
<b>RRF</b>	<b>Rapid Reaction Force</b>
<b>RS</b>	<b>Republika Srpska</b>
<b>RSFSR</b>	<b>Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic</b>
<b>RSK</b>	<b>Republic of Serb Krajina</b>
<b>RUSSBAT</b>	<b>Russian Battalion</b>
<b>SACEUR</b>	<b>Supreme Allied Commander Europe</b>
<b>SANU</b>	<b>Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts</b>
<b>SFRY</b>	<b>Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</b>
<b>SHAPE</b>	<b>Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe</b>
<b>UN</b>	<b>United Nations</b>
<b>UNCRO</b>	<b>United Nations Confidence Restoring Operation</b>
<b>UNPA</b>	<b>United Nations Protected Area</b>
<b>UNPROFOR</b>	<b>United Nations Protection Force</b>

UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

## **Note on transliteration and citation**

I have used the Library of Congress system of transliteration except in the case of names where an alternative spelling is very common: for example, Yeltsin, Tolstoy.

I have used a modified version of the Harvard system of citation: references are given in footnotes by surname of author and year of publication in brackets – for example, Gus'kova (1993) – and full bibliographical details are given in the bibliography. I have cited newspaper articles using the surname of the author and the exact date of publication: for example, Iusin (28 May 1992).



## Introduction

The outbreak of war in Yugoslavia in 1991 followed swiftly after the dramatic events in Central and Eastern Europe of the late 1980s that marked the end of the Cold War: the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Central and Eastern Europe, the fall of communist regimes across the region, the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation, and German re-unification. The wars were partly a result of those changes because the League of Communists of Yugoslavia lost its legitimacy and unifying role as communist regimes collapsed across the region; and because, during the Cold War, the threat of Soviet invasion maintained the unity of the country, while neither NATO nor the Soviet Union would allow Yugoslavia to collapse since this would create a dangerously unstable region in which superpower competition would deepen.

The Yugoslav Wars became the most severe of a number of ethnic conflicts that arose throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union following the fall of communism and the end of the post-Second World War international system. The wars themselves, and the international responses to them, are important indicators as to what kind of international system is replacing the Cold War world. Is it one in which a number of states will compete for power and influence, or will they instead seek to co-operate in order to maintain peace and secure justice? Alternatively, will they turn inwards and try to avoid any involvement in conflicts outside their immediate vicinity, judging them to have no effect on their national interests and consequently not to merit attention? Or are the conflicts themselves a sign of a world in which the system of state sovereignty that has prevailed in Europe for 350 years is collapsing in the face of separatist tendencies within, and globalisation without? Or do they actually show that the desire for nations to have their own state is stronger than ever?

Special attention must also be paid to the Russian Federation in analysing the new world political system. No longer able to claim the title of 'superpower', the successor to the Soviet Union remains a major power, or at least has the potential to become one. What kind of state it becomes, and what kind of policies its leaders pursue, are key questions in the development of world politics. Will policy makers attempt to re-establish Russia's imperial role, or will they endeavour to transform it into a nation-state? Will they pursue a competitive great power strategy, or will they seek to co-operate with leaders of other states in regulating relations between them, preventing conflicts, and tackling common threats?

Although the Yugoslav conflicts were not the most pressing concern for the Russian government, its responses to the conflicts, and the criticism of policy levelled



by the opposition, give an insight into the orientation of official Russian foreign policy since 1992 and the alternatives to it. The issues raised were central to a definition of what kind of state Russia would be and how it would act in the international arena. For example, would it support what was widely perceived in Russia to be its traditional ally, Serbia? Would it insist on Russia's traditional strategic and economic interests in the Balkans? Would it use the conflicts to promote its own position as a post-Cold War great power? Or would it co-operate with Western powers to end the conflict and create a just peace? Or would it decide that it could not be involved in conflict resolution in the Balkans when it had to deal with conflicts in the Russian Federation and in the former Soviet space, and was suffering severe economic troubles?

By looking at Russian responses to the wars in former Yugoslavia we can understand more fully the priorities and approaches of Russian foreign policy, as well as the nature of the developing post-Cold War international environment in general. Such understanding is necessary in order to devise appropriate responses, and for the pursuit of peace in the former Yugoslavia and in Europe as a whole.

I shall analyse Russian policy from the start of 1992 when the Russian Federation became an independent state, to the Dayton Accords at the end of 1995 that ended the Bosnian war. I shall not discuss Russian policy after 1995, such as policy towards the Kosovo conflict of 1999. This is mainly a matter of space constraints. But it also makes sense to analyse the conflicts separately, since the Kosovo conflict created new issues and different priorities. It was also in a different period of Russian policy: conveniently, the period from 1992 to 1995 is the 'Kozyrev era', since, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Kozyrev had the most significant input into policy; his replacement by Evgenii Primakov at the start of January 1996 marked the start of a new era.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part provides a theoretical background, creating a framework in which to interpret the development of policy. Chapter 1 discusses rival international theories and their applicability to the post-Cold War world. The second chapter investigates general Russian foreign policy from 1992 to 1995 in the context of these theories. Chapter 3 looks at the various potential approaches that Russia could adopt/have adopted towards the Yugoslav conflicts.

In part two, I examine the evolution of Russian policy towards the conflicts from 1992 to the end of 1993. The focus of attention is primarily the domestic ideological and political struggle for control of policy of the newly independent state, and I argue that this period witnessed sharp divisions and debate in which the Yugoslav conflicts played a key role. Chapter 4 investigates the initial 'liberal internationalist' phase of foreign

policy dominated by the pro-Western ideological outlook of the Yeltsin 'reformers'. This phase was symbolised by Russia's vote in the United Nations Security Council to impose sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro for their involvement in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This decision sparked intense debate in Russia and a concerted attack on the Foreign Ministry's wider policy and philosophy. The result of this debate was a shift to a more assertive policy that enjoyed relatively consensual support. In relation to Yugoslavia, it was centred on the idea of Russia's status and rights as a great power (chapter 5).

Part three continues to investigate the domestic determinants of foreign policy, but the emphasis is now more on Russia's role on the international stage and its contribution to the efforts of the 'international community' to end the wars in former Yugoslavia. The more assertive Russia demanded to be involved in these efforts, and insisted that its interests be taken into account. This was demonstrated starkly by the Sarajevo crisis of February 1994 (chapter 6). Following the crisis, the major powers sought to develop a common policy; Russia and the United States were now more directly involved in devising a peace plan; but the necessity to maintain the concert undermined the effectiveness of the peace-making efforts (chapter 7). Finally, in chapter 8 I show that events in Bosnia and Croatia created both an increased potential and a heightened need for a negotiated settlement, but this could only be achieved by strong international action. NATO air strikes were resisted by Russia but contributed to the progress towards a settlement, and it was American diplomacy in particular that brokered the Dayton agreements.

In the conclusion, I evaluate Russia's policy in terms of Russia's own interests, and in terms of the consequences for Yugoslavia. I also discuss the wider implications of its policy for Russia's position and approach in the world and the evolving international system.



# Chapter 1

## International relations after the Cold War

### Four basic questions

The primary question we are concerned with is: what kind of policy is a state (Russia) pursuing? But we should also be prepared to answer the question: what kind of policy *should* that state be pursuing? However, even if we believe normatively that a state ought to have a particular set of policy aims, the analysis of existing policy should make no assumptions and must start by identifying which approaches actually are dominant. Our answer to the second question will depend partly on an answer to two further questions: what kind of *international system* is developing, and what kind of international system *ought* to develop.

Thus by distinguishing between the system level and the state level, and between prescription and description, we have four inter-related questions:

1. What kind of policy is a particular state (Russia) pursuing?
2. What kind of policy should that state be pursuing?
3. What kind of international system is developing?
4. What kind of international system should be developing?

Rival international relations theories may provide answers to the last three questions; however, attempts to answer the first question through the lens of any one large-scale international relations theory may be misleading. Since there are choices for policy makers, and individual policy actors have their own answers to the second question, we cannot assume *a priori* that a particular approach is being applied. Furthermore, there may be elements of different theories present in the policy of a state, and the relative elements may change over time. International relations theories should be a guide to understanding policy, not a straitjacket. Similarly, attempts to force policy into one dogmatic mould also may have undesirable results.

I shall begin by analysing the theory that has had the foremost influence among both diplomatic and academic circles since the Second World War, and then investigate challenges to it.

## Realism and neo-realism

Realism was the theoretical tradition begun by E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau before and after the Second World War.<sup>1</sup> They argued that since there is no world government with the means to control the actions of states and to punish aggressors, the international system is characterised by anarchy, and each sovereign state seeks to maximise its military power and to build alliances in order to guarantee its security. The policies of a state in maximising its power and security are dictated by its geo-political position: by its geographical size and position, by its natural resources, by the configuration of neighbouring powers. In a region in which a state has interests, it will act to maximise its power relative to other states with interests in the region, on a zero-sum model: an increase in its own power or influence can be achieved only by reducing another state's power or influence.

Neo-realists, of whom the leading theorist is Kenneth Waltz, agree with their realist predecessors that the international system is characterised by states seeking to maximise their power in an environment in which there is no overarching authority; but they argue that there is a structure to international politics. The form of the international system at any particular time is determined by the configuration of 'great powers', identified not just by their military, but also by their economic strength. Waltz's acknowledgement of the impact of nuclear weapons on the calculations of the major powers signifies a further departure from traditional realism: whereas the latter saw war as a recurring feature of global politics, and perhaps a necessary instrument in the restoration of a balance of power, for Waltz, the possession of nuclear weapons without a first strike capability on the part of the great powers counteracts the danger of war between them.<sup>2</sup>

The Cold War international system was a bi-polar system in which there were only two superpowers, each with its associated allies. Neo-realists are wary of the consequences of the collapse of this system. They argue that the bi-polar system will give way to a multi-polar system which will be inherently less stable than its predecessor because there will be a larger number of major powers to balance each other, making the situation more fluid and unpredictable. The implied inevitability of these developments is a feature of the neo-realist approach. Currently, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the United States is the only global superpower, its military and economic capabilities exceeding those of any other state. Inevitably, this dangerous situation will be rectified and a new balance of power will evolve. Waltz predicts the

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<sup>1</sup> Burchill (1996a).

<sup>2</sup> Waltz (1993).



rise to great power status on a par with the United States, of Germany (or the European Union), Japan, and China.

Neo-realists, then, begin with the third question, referring to the structure of the international system which is defined by the number of great powers. They have little to offer in answer to the fourth question, since they believe that even posing such a question represents a misunderstanding of the true nature of international relations. Attempts to answer it and to devise an improved political world are misguided and dangerous, symptomatic of the kind of idealistic approach which realism first reacted against in the inter-war period and which it blamed for the Second World War.

Like realists, neo-realists emphasise that the internal composition of a state is of little significance to its behaviour in the international system, since its national interests (relating to its military and economic security) are defined by its objective geo-political situation. This is therefore a *state centric* approach, with explanation at the level of states, rather than looking within the state. For example, neo-realists point to the behaviour of the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War which, they claim, was remarkably similar in both cases despite contrasting ideological declarations and differing economic, political, and social systems.

Descriptively, if this analysis is adhered to as a strict paradigm, then it may limit understanding of a state's policy. How, for example, can neo-realists explain changes in policy approach? Insisting on the neo-realist paradigm leads to attempts to explain all policy in terms of maximising national interest. Hence, policy shifts are interpreted as necessary adjustments to changing circumstances. An example of this is Waltz's explanation of Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze's 'New Political Thinking'. He argues that the new course was adopted because of the necessity to revitalise the Soviet economy in order to maintain the Soviet Union's power. He writes that Leonid Brezhnev's successors 'realised that the Soviet Union could no longer support a first-rate military establishment on the basis of a third-rate economy. Economic reorganisation, and the reduction of imperial burdens, became an externally imposed necessity, which in turn required internal reforms.'<sup>3</sup>

The problem here is that although this was undoubtedly a major element in Gorbachev's thinking, another element was the recognition of universal human values, and the attempt to increase security through international agreements and by developing 'inter-dependency' through trade links. New Political Thinking can thus be seen as an attack on the traditional Soviet zero-sum military thinking and a recognition that national interests went beyond narrow military, or even economic, strength. It was a

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.



rejection of realist dogma that entailed a widening of the definition of 'national interests'.

This example shows that it is essential to look within the state. In some cases, it is true that shifts in policies may be due to changes in the geo-political environment. But in other cases they may be explicable only by reference to internal factors: the policy priorities and theoretical/ideological beliefs of individual actors, and the balance of interests/power within the state between institutions and individuals. Here we must distinguish between two aspects: the overall political, social, and economic system on the one hand, and the internal workings of a state – institutional competition, electoral politics, and individual policy preferences – on the other. Individuals or institutions may adopt different policy approaches, while some theorists argue that the economic/political/social structure of a state will also determine what kind of policy is pursued.

I shall now turn to theories which reject the 'realistic' framework by looking within the state.

## **Liberal internationalism**

Liberal internationalists argue that a state's general foreign policy approach is defined by its internal structure; specifically, that liberal democratic states are less likely than authoritarian or non-capitalist states to fight wars against each other and are more likely to co-operate in the international sphere. Consequently, the more states there are with this internal system, the less the chance of war. Hence, this theory moves from the inside out, rather than from the outside in.<sup>4</sup> It starts with the question: what kind of state is *X*? This provides an anticipated answer to the first question: if the state is liberal democratic, it will be peaceful. The answer to the third question is that the world is divided between liberal democratic states and other states. At the system level, it is argued that the best system is one in which all states are liberal democratic. Normatively, these claims are based on two moral principles: firstly, that liberal democracy is inherently superior to other political-economic systems and, secondly, that it is also superior because it leads to peace.

In order to evaluate these claims, it is useful to distinguish the two elements of the concept: liberalism and democracy. There are thus two possibly independent claims: that market liberal economies do not go to war (inter-dependency theory), and that democratic states do not go to war with each other (the 'Pacific Union' argument).

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<sup>4</sup> Burchill (1996b), p. 30.

## Pacific Union

The concept of a 'Pacific Union' holds that there are restraining factors operating in democratic states which reduce the potential for war between them. Jack Snyder identifies four reasons why it is assumed that mature democratic states do not go to war with each other:

1. Median-voter interests: in a democracy, power is held by ordinary citizens who will avoid war where possible because they bear the costs and risks.
2. Checks and balances in domestic political institutional arrangements: the difficulty of achieving a consensus among the various branches of government limits the possibility of war.
3. The 'free marketplace' of ideas: free speech and the diffusion of information allow effective evaluation of policies.
4. The notion of 'democratic norms': domestically, disputes are settled peacefully through the political process and this 'habit' is transferred to foreign relations.<sup>5</sup>

Hence, there are restraining factors operating in democratic states which do not apply in authoritarian states. In the latter, the élite is liable to seek foreign policy diversions to keep the population from expressing domestic political demands – although the failure of such campaigns is likely to strengthen those demands – with the result that authoritarian states often have an explicitly nationalist state ideology. A democratic state is less likely to be aggressive, although if its vital interests are threatened – most clearly, if it is invaded – then it will obviously fight to defend itself.

Snyder suggests that the theory may not apply to democratising states such as Russia, in contrast to maturely democratic states. Democratising states may be more belligerent even than authoritarian states because the four reasons why democratic states will be peaceful may not apply or are distorted, in particular because élites are liable to manipulate public opinion and arouse nationalist sentiments in order to protect their own interests and power. This is certainly a phenomenon observable in former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, although Snyder stresses that we must not over-generalise: Hungary, for example, is relatively peaceful and non-nationalist despite the treatment of ethnic Hungarians in Rumania, Ukraine, and Vojvodina (although that

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<sup>5</sup> Snyder (1996). Some liberal commentators argue that membership of institutions such as the European Union and perhaps even NATO changes the calculations of state actors as they are influenced by the democratic political culture of those institutions; see, for example, Fierke and Wiener (1999). This approach can be termed 'constructivism' because it is held that shared belief systems are constructed through co-operation; Garrett and Weingast (1993).



treatment may be less severe than he implies). Thus he concludes that we must be aware that different circumstances lead to different situations.

These points suggest that other factors shape the effects of democratisation rather than the mere fact that the state is democratising. This means that, just as we cannot ‘scientifically’ ascertain foreign policy choices from the geo-political position of a state, neither can we *a priori* predict the foreign policy behaviour of a state by reference only to its political system, ignoring geo-political factors, the nature of other states, and specific internal factors, such as choices of leaders, institutional competition, strength of the economy, and electoral politics. Like neo-realism, the Pacific Union argument ignores agency. The premise that Russia is a democratising state would appear to be unfruitful as a basis for understanding or predicting its foreign policy. This is not to say that democratisation has not affected the process of foreign policy making and the policies adopted: it has had a profound impact. But we must not make generalised assumptions; we should investigate those effects empirically to see what specific impact democratisation has had, and we must look at the specific internal political process of that state in order to understand the policy outcome.

### **Inter-dependency and globalisation**

The other element in traditional liberal internationalism is the belief that the spread of market economies across the globe will enhance the prospects of peace. As with the political side, there are again two moral claims: that this is inherently the best economic system for any state, and that, instrumentally, it is the best system because it creates peace between states. The application to our four questions takes a similar form, since the categorisation of the state’s economic system tells us how a state will behave. We are also informed as to what defines the international system (the distinction between capitalist and non-capitalist states) and what kind of system is to be favoured (one in which the maximum number of states are capitalist).

The argument concentrates on links between states that serve to pacify them. There are two main reasons why the spread of free trade between states is believed to promote peace:

1. States are dependent on each other for their wealth. War would reduce this wealth.
2. Contacts developed through trading enhance co-operative tendencies and reduce ignorant xenophobia and extreme ethnic nationalism.



These claims do not relate to the internal structure of the state, but to the nature of economic relations between states. Hence, in theory they apply to any state that does not have trade barriers, even if the state does not have a market economy. It is interesting to note that Gorbachev and Shevardnadze invoked the principle of inter-dependency while the Soviet Union still had a planned economy: trading with the West would lead to increased links and benefits for both sides, thus decreasing tensions. Nevertheless, most proponents of the theory promote not only free trade, but also the development of market economies in which the government plays a minimal role. This allows them to assert that features of the internal economic structure of market economies may encourage peace, in a manner similar to the Pacific Union argument. For example, peace may be considered to be in the interests of most businesses because war disrupts trade and usually leads to much greater state control of the economy.

The first claim shows that the efficacy of inter-dependency in creating peace depends on its success in increasing wealth. The theory is that universal free trade works on the same principle as domestic *laissez faire*: it is the most efficient economic system because the market automatically produces an optimum outcome. Internationally, this is partly achieved by a division of labour based on a country's 'comparative advantage', its ability to produce a particular commodity at a cheaper rate than other countries because it has the necessary expertise, materials, and on account of other geographic factors. However, a country that has already established an advantage is in a superior position to a country seeking to develop one. The implication is that some countries may be destined to occupy an inferior position in the 'global market place', supplying raw materials to the developed countries. The only way for it to break out of that position is to impose tariffs to protect its developing industries.<sup>6</sup>

When the liberal theory was formulated, it incorporated the belief that the best political unit was the democratic nation-state, and the best international system was one in which such states traded freely with each other. It could not envisage developments in the late twentieth century. The communications and technological revolution has allowed the unrestricted global flow of capital and the growth of vast multi-national companies in the late twentieth century. In addition, the nature of technological production and the easier transit of materials have made traditional 'comparative advantage' less significant. The primary 'comparative advantage' then becomes the price of labour: companies invest in countries where labour is cheapest.<sup>7</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> See Waltz's discussion of the nineteenth century economist Friedrich List; Waltz (1993), pp. 56-57; also, Gellner (1983).

<sup>7</sup> For an account of this process, see Gray (1998a), particularly chapter 4.



consequence is that the gap between the rich and the poor within countries, as well as between countries, is increasing.

A further effect is that governments now have less control over domestic policy. Multi-national companies are outside the domestic legal framework, the free flow of capital undermines governments' attempts to control the impact of financial transactions on the economy, and foreign companies investing in a country may exert pressure on the government to implement certain policies backed by the threat of withdrawing their investment. Even if there are aid and trade deals to encourage the development of the poorer countries, these too come with strong conditions fixed by international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund.

The problems associated with 'globalisation' undermine the claims that unfettered capitalism is the route to global prosperity. If instead it deepens divisions within and between countries, creating poverty, unemployment, and insecurity, then it fails in its own terms. It is also highly unlikely to contribute to peace; instead, competition and divisions might erupt into violent confrontations on a North-South axis, perhaps through terrorist activity. But even if it did promote peace, the other effects challenge the primacy accorded to peace-creating. It is not sufficient to consider war, and the prevention of it, the sole purpose of international politics; international politics must also address these social, economic, and political problems. This is not merely of moral importance, but can also be justified in a realist, 'national interests' manner: deepening divisions will increase the danger of war, as well as creating other effects, such as large scale migration. Furthermore, other aspects of globalisation – such as environmental degradation and drugs trafficking – can only be tackled on a global level and cannot be left for the 'free market' to control.

Where does this analysis leave us in regard to our four questions? The policy of an individual state is more likely to be determined by its position in the global economic system than by the mere fact that it has a market economy. We start then, like realism, with an answer to the third question. If the analysis is correct, how should an individual state behave? It has been suggested that the threat of a North-South conflict requires the richer countries to withdraw and take steps to defend themselves and their interests (through stronger immigration controls, for example). But, apart from this being a morally questionable attitude, it is likely to reinforce the trends that I have identified, rather than reduce them. Similarly, the loss of democratic control over the economy due to globalisation, which is often discussed as if it is an inevitable development of history rather than the result of specific decisions and rules, has to be tackled directly. The



moral questions are therefore of primary importance, although, again, this does not help us to predict the policy actually adopted by a particular state.

One of the results of globalisation is a loss of sovereignty. Sovereignty is being eroded, either voluntarily – as in the case of the European Union – or as a result of globalisation. But at the same time, a backlash is occurring.

## Nationalism

Some commentators have suggested that the nation-state is becoming less significant with globalisation, as national economies are becoming more intertwined and under reduced domestic control, and as supra-national political units grow in importance. But other events, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, show that nationalism – the desire of a ‘nation’ to have its own state – is as strong a force as ever.

Modern analyses of nationalism emphasise the fact that nations are constructed entities.<sup>8</sup> They are not pre-existing natural phenomena, nor do they flow down to us unbroken through the river of history. In the nineteenth century – the great age of nationalism – élites concentrated on creating national consciousness to support their political programmes of creating nation-states. Ernest Gellner argues that this process corresponded with economic modernisation. The new economic system of manufacturing and expanded trade required a language of education and communication across a large area, based on what he calls a ‘high culture’. In other words, nations had to be forged, and forged they were, so effectively that the masses – and even the élite themselves – believed in their seamless history.

Gellner’s account is a form of sociological determinism, since the process of modernisation led inevitably to nationalism. But it does not apply in the late twentieth century to areas where modernisation has already occurred. The revival of extreme nationalism in the Balkans resulted from the deliberate policies of leaders manipulating popular sentiment and creating a nationalist mood. However, there had to be some reason for the people to respond, some fertile ground for the planted seed of aggressive nationalism to grow in. It was able to grow partly because this was a period of uncertainty and instability, of insecurity in the face of globalisation, loss of prestige, and economic decline. But why did the reaction take a nationalist form? Walker Connor suggests that sociological accounts of nationalism tend to skim over a very obvious feature of nationalism: the irrational loyalty to the nation, expressed in terms of blood

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<sup>8</sup> See especially, Gellner (1983); Hobsbawm (1992); Anderson (1991).

descent, in which the nation is viewed as a large family.<sup>9</sup> In Yugoslavia, the Serbs and Croats in particular viewed their nation in these terms,<sup>10</sup> while the collapse of communism enabled repressed historical memories to be expressed and manipulated.<sup>11</sup>

It is common in analyses of nationalism to distinguish between two types of nationalism: civic/inclusive and ethnic/exclusive. The first – in which membership of the nation is extended to all the inhabitants of a country – is associated with individual human rights-based democracy, the latter – in which membership of the nation is reserved for a particular ethnic group – is associated with populist democracy or authoritarianism in which the will of the nation overrides all else.<sup>12</sup> It is the second form, feeding on the irrational ethno-national bond, that has been prevalent in former Yugoslavia and has also threatened to become dominant in the former Soviet Union. Russia, which is still a multi-national state, is particularly susceptible to extreme ethnic nationalism after its imperial collapse; this could have catastrophic consequences for ethnic minorities within the Russian Federation, and for the states bordering Russia that have large Russian-speaking minorities. I shall discuss in the next chapter what kind of state Russia is becoming and whether its policy makers have embraced inclusive civic nationalism or exclusive ethnic nationalism, a choice that will have a significant impact on its foreign policy. But there is also one way in which this issue connects Russia and the former Yugoslavia more directly.

## **The ‘clash of civilisations’**

Samuel Huntington has famously answered our third question by stating that the post-Cold War world will be marked most significantly by what he calls the ‘clash of civilisations’. The world will be divided into regions on the basis of a common ‘culture’, which refers to language, religion, or political norms. Huntington writes:

Civilisation identity will be increasingly important in the future, and the world will be shaped in large measure by the interactions among seven or eight major civilisations. These include Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American and possibly African civilisation. The most important conflicts of the future will occur along the cultural fault lines separating these civilisations from one another.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Connor (1993).

<sup>10</sup> It is encapsulated in the Serb myth of the epic battle of Kosovo; see Anzulovic (1999).

<sup>11</sup> See Denich (1994).

<sup>12</sup> Hoffmann (1995), p. 164.

<sup>13</sup> Huntington (1993), p. 25.



The Balkans is a prime example of such a fault line, where the 'Western', the 'Islamic', and the 'Slavic Orthodox' civilisations meet.

There are numerous problems with Huntington's thesis as a description of the nature of the post-Cold War world.<sup>14</sup> It is unclear, first of all, what 'culture' refers to and, secondly, why it should be the basis of a state's foreign policy. Historically, it is true that states sometimes acted on the basis of religion. This was either for ideological purposes – because it was believed that a particular religion must be spread or other religions resisted – or because it provided a good basis for increasing influence and power (i.e. for realist motives). But why should language or religion be so important in the modern world? Although Western states will seek to preserve their secular status if they are faced with religious fundamentalism, the 'battle' against fundamentalism is more likely to take place *within* states (admittedly with outside influence) than *between* states, whether the state be Turkey, India, Israel, or the United States.

Empirically, the theory falls down in particular because realist and nationalist considerations or other ideological factors usually have priority in the foreign policy making of a state over vague notions of cultural affinity. Furthermore, nationalist feeling is far more capable of motivating masses than the vaguer notion of 'civilisation'.

These problems indicate that the notion of a 'clash of civilisations' is unhelpful as an analytical tool, and may be counter-productive if accepted by policy makers. Unlike realism and inter-dependency theory, it takes into account ideology and cultural outlook, but at the expense of over-estimating their influence while under-estimating the enduring strength of attachment to the nation-state. The latter, and realist considerations associated with it, remains a major feature of the post-Cold War world. Furthermore, as we have seen, a more significant clash than that between 'civilisations' is likely to be the divide between North and South based on economic inequality. As Graham Fuller puts it:

'Civilisational clash' is not so much over Jesus Christ, Confucius, or the Prophet Muhammad as it is over the unequal distribution of world power, wealth, and influence, and the perceived historical lack of respect accorded to small states and peoples by larger ones. Culture is the vehicle for expression of conflict, not its cause.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> For detailed criticism of the article, see Rubinstein and Crocker (1994); and – particularly for problems with the concept of 'civilisations' and its historical inapplicability – Coulombis and Veremis (1994).

<sup>15</sup> Fuller (1995), pp. 153-4.

## **Institutionalism**

Huntington's thesis is difficult to categorise. On the one hand, it might be considered part of the attempt to find a basis for co-operation and peace between states, akin to liberal internationalism. On the other hand, it emphasises immutable differences between 'civilisations' that are the basis for friction and potential war. The question remains: can peace only be built between states which have a similar socio-political and economic system, or a similar religion/language? And how can the effects of the anarchical nature of the international arena be mitigated?

An 'anarchical' international system exists because there is no equivalent to the domestic state – with its monopoly on the legitimate use of force – at the international level. Countries have no choice but to maximise power in order to protect themselves. But a world government replicating the national state on a global scale is inconceivable. The nation-state remains the basic unit of political organisation (as well as the aspiration of sub-state national movements). Governments of nation-states are, on the whole, as unwilling to cede control to a larger political entity as they are to allow secession from within (even moves towards union in Western Europe are fraught with friction and mistrust).

Nevertheless, international institutions such as the United Nations and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, previously the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, CSCE) represent a potential framework for moving towards greater co-operation and control at the international level while maintaining for individual states a significant degree of national sovereignty. 'Institutionalism' holds that such developments are both possible and desirable.<sup>16</sup>

Realists are inclined to interpret the institutions as means for states to pursue their own interests, rather than as instruments for the application of universal values. They may recognise that one way out of the security dilemma is for powers to act in 'concert'; but the effect is that the great powers that make up the 'poles' of the international system are likely to deal with disputes among the smaller states in such a way as to reduce tensions among themselves, rather than to apply any principles of justice or effective conflict resolution. For example, during the nineteenth century, a great power 'concert' operated much of the time, by which the major European states resolved disputes in, for instance, the Balkans by making settlements that achieved a compromise between their own interests, rather than by applying any principles such as the right to self-determination to tackle the issues themselves. Nevertheless, even this

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<sup>16</sup> Andrew Linklater calls this 'rationalism'; Linklater (1996).



means of reducing disputes between the powers broke down in the face of the arms race, the alliance system, and expansionist policies of the major European powers in the period before the First World War.

In the inter-war period, the League of Nations was powerless to prevent the rise of fascism and the outbreak of world war. But the Second World War led to a conviction on the part of the victorious Western powers at least that human rights should be protected by law, even if this required an erosion of state sovereignty. Consequently, minority and individual rights were enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1951), the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1987), and so on. Progress towards fulfilment of the principles of these documents was hindered by the Cold War, but in the 1990s they were increasingly put into practice. This entailed a move towards liberal institutionalism, away from realism.

One effect was the creation of international war crimes tribunals, for Rwanda and Yugoslavia, and moves towards a permanent International Criminal Court. In addition, the European Union has increasingly become a forum for the promulgation of rights, through, for example, the European Court of Human Rights. However, these developments were not accompanied by reform of the supreme international institution, the United Nations. The result is a mismatch between these developments in international law and the structure of the main institution that is supposed to implement and enforce that law. For example, military enforcement action, which is envisaged in chapters VII and VIII of the United Nations Charter (1945), is only authorised if there is a consensus among the great powers in the Security Council; yet those powers usually act on the basis of their own interests rather than the impartial application of international law. If a consensus cannot be reached – for example, if one power blocks such action – then the other powers either have to accept this limitation and do nothing, or act without a United Nations Security Council (UNSC) mandate. Such unilateral action is likely to be interpreted by other powers as violating the UN Charter, and the states may be accused of acting merely to promote their own interests.

Since 1993, Russia has been less prepared to accept the idea of universal international law which it espoused in the immediate post-Cold War situation. As I shall argue in the following chapter, this was partly the result of the wasted opportunities of 1992, when Western states did not seize the opportunity provided by the liberal approach of the Russian government to develop inclusive institutions that would be capable of implementing international law. In part also, it was due to the preponderance



of realist thinking in the Russian élite. But it was also due to continued realist thinking in the West. For example, a lack of consistency in the application of military intervention or other action to protect human rights undermines the claims that the West is an impartial protector of such rights. And the United States in particular refuses to accept the authority of such impartial organs of international law as the International Criminal Court; if the world's strongest power will not allow its citizens to be subject to its jurisdiction, then why should the other states? Finally, in relation to Russia, the main problem was the refusal to rule out expansion of NATO (without envisaging Russia becoming a member) or its radical re-structuring. It is obvious that a military alliance of a limited number of states cannot serve as both a collective security organisation and an organisation deciding on and implementing military intervention in the name of international law. Not surprisingly, NATO expansion is interpreted in Russia as the result of continued zero-sum thinking in the West.

## **Social democratic institutionalism**

Russian disillusionment with the West has also resulted from the application of neo-liberal economic theory to Russian reform. The increase in application of human rights law, with its effect of undermining state sovereignty, has coincided with globalisation and the American-led global application of neo-liberal economic principles. Russia was one of the worst victims of the latter. The ideology of global free trade is promoted most vigorously by the United States, the country which – being the strongest country – benefits most from its application (just as Great Britain benefited from its promotion in the nineteenth century). Not surprisingly, the espousal of neo-liberalism is widely viewed as serving American interests. The result, as I shall examine in the next chapter, is to undermine belief in ‘Western values’ including the idea of universal human rights, since they are perceived as being part of the same package.

Disillusionment with the West encourages more nationalist and authoritarian approaches, and gives extremists the opportunity to play on the fears of the population, which may be particularly dangerous at a time of democratisation. Exclusive nationalism or abuse of individual rights can be justified as necessary for the rebirth of the country. Human rights principles can be represented as part of the overall Western ‘neo-imperialism’. The charge of ‘cultural imperialism’ and the undermining effect of relativism has devastated the confidence of many Western liberals. One response is to question *whose interests* resistance to notions of human rights serves; talk of ‘traditional culture’ is often used to mask policies that serve the interests of the ruling group.



But it is equally important to abandon the dogma of neo-liberalism. Neo-liberals argue that a market economy is a necessary condition for the enjoyment of basic human freedom. But pure neo-liberalism – the application of ‘market forces’ to all areas of human activity and across the world – undermines some of the most basic human needs – work, health, food – and consigns millions of people to poverty and insecurity. The human rights element of liberal internationalism can and should be separated from the free trade, laissez faire economic principles, and extended to include basic human needs as well as freedoms. This can only be done through international institutions supported by the major powers, but without the latter dictating the form of internal economic arrangements or assuming that a global ‘free market’ will solve all problems. It is also vital to include in the programme of human rights, the right to have a say in the decisions of the society; in other words, democracy. Although it is often claimed that a market economy is a pre-requisite of democracy and the development of a civil society, there is no logically necessary reason why this should take the form of a pure market economy on the neo-liberal model; as Hoffmann puts it, it is questionable whether ‘free economics must “ultimately” lead to free politics as well’.<sup>17</sup> On the contrary, a pure market economy is likely to be profoundly undemocratic. Firstly, as Marx demonstrated, accumulation of capital confers economic power. Furthermore, money may confer advantages and power in a wide range of areas, not just purely economic; in Michael Walzer’s terminology, money is a ‘dominant good’.<sup>18</sup> And, thirdly, a strongly authoritarian government may be needed to preserve a pure market economy since it is an artificial creation.<sup>19</sup>

Rather than liberal internationalism, then, perhaps it is time to promote *social democratic* institutionalism.

## Conclusion

I have argued a form of answer to our initial fourth question. It combines an attempt to reduce the anarchical nature of the international arena through institutions which enhance co-operation and enforce peaceful international norms of conduct and international law. These institutions reproduce some of the functions of domestic states at the international level, while retaining the democratic state as the basic political unit. They would work most effectively as a hierarchy of institutions, building up from the regional level. In Europe, the European Union does not necessarily fulfil this role as it develops into an economic super-state. NATO remains a military alliance which

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<sup>17</sup> Hoffmann (1995), p. 175.

<sup>18</sup> Walzer (1983); as he points out, this is a generalisation of Marx’s analysis.

<sup>19</sup> Gray (1998a).



originated as an anti-Soviet alliance; as a military organisation, it also has a limited capability to implement economic justice and oversee the protection of human rights. The OSCE fulfils some of the functions in relation to the latter – it organises observations of elections, for example – as does the Council of Europe, but the major Western powers remain suspicious of giving full commitment to a broader role for them. At present, the supreme arbiter is the United Nations Security Council, but this is too often an institution that serves the interests of the great powers.

My answer to the second question, then, is that states should act in such a way as to promote inclusive institutions such as the OSCE and the UN: for moral reasons, but also because, in the long term, it will promote a more secure world which is in every state's interests. However, for individual states such as Russia, there is a major obstacle if a perception exists that *other* states are not acting in this way or that they themselves are being excluded. They are faced with a 'games theory' scenario, and are forced to resort to realist calculations. Much depends, therefore, on the actions of the major Western powers, and perceptions of them, in which the former Yugoslavia – as a major conflict zone within Europe – occupies a key place.

## Chapter 2

### Russian foreign policy from 1992 to 1995

The evolution of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation since it became an independent state at the end of 1991 has been the subject of numerous articles, books, and studies, and there is no need to go into chronological detail here.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I shall attempt to analyse the theoretical underpinnings of the official policy and of the arguments of its critics, as far as possible within the framework developed in chapter 1. This will provide a context for investigating rival approaches to the Yugoslav crisis.

It is generally recognised that Russia's foreign policy from 1992 to 1995 can be divided into three periods: an initial 'liberal Westernising' phase during the first half of 1992; a transitional phase of criticism, debate, and adjustment in the second half of 1992 and early 1993; and a period of relative consensus, during which there was coalescence around a more assertive, 'pragmatic nationalist' approach, from spring 1993.<sup>2</sup> How do these labels correspond to the international relations theories identified in the first chapter?

#### The liberal Westernising phase

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) of the newly independent Russian Federation, under Andrei Kozyrev, pursued a form of liberal internationalism. The main focus of attention was relations with Western Europe and, in particular, the United States, because Kozyrev believed that Russia had common interests with those states, which would lead to a true partnership between them. Those common interests derived from the fact that Russia was now a democracy, was developing a market economy, and was seeking to participate fully in the global economy and to develop trading links with other leading industrialised states. This was a clear expression of liberal democratic internationalism, making assumptions from the internal nature of the state (its economic, political, and social form). It was thus closely linked to the domestic reform programme. The Yeltsin leadership answered the question: what kind of state should the Russian Federation be? by arguing that it should be a secular, liberal, democratic, capitalist state. They believed that liberal, market democracy was morally superior (replacing the totalitarian experiment of communism with true freedom), that it would lead to prosperity, and that it would ensure peace with other states. Hence, Russia would become a member of the society of 'civilised' states. The liberal Westernisers believed

<sup>1</sup> See bibliographical note for a survey of the literature on post-1991 Russian foreign policy.

<sup>2</sup> The labels 'liberal Westernisers' and 'pragmatic nationalists' are used in Malcolm *et al* (1996).



that Russia would act as an equal partner with other liberal democratic states in building a 'new world order'. At the same time, those states would support Russia in its transition period, by providing substantial aid and opening their markets for trade. They would recognise the importance of a successful transformation in Russia and the peace and prosperity that it would bring.

In addition, the liberal Westernisers emphasised the importance of international institutions in enhancing co-operation between states. They believed that institutions, based on the enforcement of international law and the recognition by their members of civilised norms of behaviour between states, would, along with the spread of liberal democracy, enable states to escape from the 'security dilemma' that realists claimed necessitated the search for security through power. Russia, as a great liberal democratic power, would contribute on equal terms to the work of these institutions, including through peace-keeping and even peace-making.

This shows that the idea of Russia as a great power is not exclusive to a realist approach. As Kozyrev wrote in 1992:

No doubt Russia will not cease to be a great power. But it will be a normal great power. Its national interests will be a priority. But these will be interests understandable to democratic countries, and Russia will be defending them through interaction with partners, not through confrontation. In economic matters, too, once on its own feet and later, after acquiring a weight commensurate with its potential in world trade, Russia will be a serious competitor to many but, at the same time, an honest partner complying with the established rules of the game in world markets.<sup>3</sup>

This reads as a fairly sophisticated expression of liberal democratic internationalism. It assumes that the transition to liberal democracy will minimise the risk of war, without idealistically ignoring the continued importance of competition. In other words, liberal democracies can be 'partners' – in the sense that they work together to achieve common aims and uphold peace – while continuing to be economic rivals; but that economic rivalry is contained within the 'rules of the game' and hence need not escalate to war. Liberal internationalists can also recognise that some powers are stronger than others, but still argue that the great powers should participate in international institutions and abide by international law and norms in their relations with other states. In fact, if it is admitted that military methods may be required to enforce international law, then the 'greater' powers have a significant contribution to make; they also have the potential to

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<sup>3</sup> Kozyrev (1992a), p. 10.

devote resources to international institutions in the struggle against global poverty and environmental crises, as well as meeting much of the costs of those institutions.

## **Criticism of liberal Westernism**

### **Neglect of the 'near abroad'**

One thrust of the attack on Russian foreign policy in 1992 was that it was too ideological and ignored pressing concerns deriving from Russia's geo-political position, in particular in relation to the other newly-independent states of the former Soviet Union, Russia's 'near abroad'. Russia had important concerns in relations in this area because of continued economic inter-dependence, the lack of border controls between Russia and the new states, the threat of ethnic disputes spreading to the Russian Federation, the presence of more than twenty-five million 'ethnic Russians' and thirty-seven million 'Russian speakers' within those states, and the fact that Russian armed forces were still stationed outside the Russian Federation itself. Instead of focusing on these priority issues, the Yeltsin administration was concerned mainly with relations with Western Europe and the United States because of its liberal internationalist principles.

Despite Kozyrev's own statement in early 1992 that 'Russia's main foreign policy priority is relations with [its] partners in the Commonwealth of Independent States,'<sup>4</sup> the Yeltsin administration undoubtedly did neglect the region of the former Soviet Union. Only after several months of Russian independence were embassies opened in former Soviet republics, and Kozyrev rarely visited those states. This lack of attention was a result of the liberal Westernising ideology, which led the MFA to concentrate on relations with Western states at the expense of more urgent matters in Russia's immediate environment. It was compounded by the government's economic policy. The Yeltsin administration promoted Russian independence and the break-up of the Soviet Union after the failed coup in August 1991 partly because it wanted to implement rapid market reforms, and the other republics could not be expected to proceed with reform at a similar pace. The Russian government therefore decided to act alone, a policy that entailed, for example, dissolving the rouble zone. The effect was to break up the integrated economy of the former Soviet Union.

This situation could not last; sooner or later, Russian policy makers would have to turn more attention to the 'near abroad'. But this did not mean that they had to abandon the liberal institutionalist approach and adopt a neo-realist perspective. Nor did it mean

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*



that a liberal institutionalist approach entailed neglecting Russia's immediate neighbours. As Robert Legvold argues, we must make a 'distinction between liberal internationalism [here used to refer to an emphasis on institutions, what I have called 'institutionalism'] and the peculiar limitations of the original Yeltsin-Kozyrev policy':

If in that policy Russian leaders placed too much emphasis on the West and foolishly not enough on their new neighbours, the fault lay in their priorities, not in the assumptions of liberal internationalism. Liberal internationalism, with its emphasis on collective responsibility and multilateral mechanisms, is about the way Russia deals with the so-called 'Near Abroad', not whether it deals with it. Similarly, if originally Russia's leadership was too smitten with the industrialised democracies of the West and too dismissive of its country's own history, again, liberal internationalism's requirements are not to blame, but rather the psychological needs of these leaders.<sup>5</sup>

Many critics accused the administration of neglecting Russia's 'real interests'. This was true in the sense that it was ignoring the 'near abroad'. But this criticism was usually part of a neo-realist attack on official policy. Critics implied that protecting Russian interests in the former Soviet space and Eastern Europe meant maximising Russian power and influence on a zero-sum realist model. But the notion of 'national interests' is not exclusive to realism, it varies according to theoretical, historical, and individual perspective. In other words, to claim that a state must protect its national interests merely begs the question of what those interests are. No doubt Andrei Kozyrev and Boris Yeltsin believed that their policy was in Russia's 'real interests', just as Gorbachev and Shevardnadze before them had believed that the policies which constituted New Political Thinking were in the Soviet Union's 'real interests'. On the other hand, ethnic nationalists would define Russia's 'real interests' in a very different way; and so on. Realists, however, disingenuously portrayed their own approach as the only one that took national interests into account (I shall examine this in more detail in relation to policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts).

The neo-realist reaction against the liberal internationalist approach of Kozyrev (and of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze before him) was partly a reflection of the residual realist thinking and suspicion of the West within Russia. This mistrust was not surprising given the rivalry and rhetoric of the only recently ended Cold War, and was also echoed in Western mistrust of Russia. But it was also the result of policy errors by the Russian government and Western governments and institutions during 1992 and 1993.

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<sup>5</sup> Legvold (1994), p. 271.



## The economic disaster

The government adopted a reform programme based on neo-liberal principles which had a calamitous impact on the economy, destroying the infrastructure of the country and creating enormous poverty, unemployment, and ill-health. The decision to opt for 'shock therapy' was made on the advocacy of Egor Gaidar and Anatolii Chubais, who were advised by free market economists in the West.<sup>6</sup> Those Western 'advisors' bear significant responsibility for the disaster. There is a common perception in Russia that Western policy makers deliberately planned the destruction of the Russian economy. For example, a public opinion survey by the All-Russian Centre for Public Opinion Research (VTsIOM) in December 1994 showed that 49 per cent of those surveyed believed that the goal of the West was to bring Russia to a state of destitution and collapse.<sup>7</sup> This perception is probably unjustified, since the 'advisors' genuinely believed in the programme of 'shock therapy' – although, with their Russian partners, they did make a lot of money from it.<sup>8</sup> But the fact that they genuinely believed in it does not absolve them from responsibility; nor does their claim that the policy only appears wrong in hindsight. A more gradual and controlled transition to a socially-orientated market economy – such as that implemented in post-war West Germany – might have brought about the desired results more effectively, more justly, and with far less hardship, and this was in fact the argument of certain economists, such as J. K. Galbraith.<sup>9</sup>

Russian distrust of the West due to 'shock therapy' is compounded by the uncritical support that Western governments – particularly the Clinton administration – gave to Yeltsin as an individual politician, as well as to the 'Chubais Clan'.<sup>10</sup> Yeltsin was seen as the guarantor of the transition to a market democracy. He and his followers manipulated this, partly by warning of the consequences if the opposition 'red-brown' coalition were to gain power. Western governments continued to support the 'democrats' despite the high levels of corruption in the administration, the storming of the parliament building in October 1993, the Chechen wars, and manipulation of the media in election campaigns. For many Russians, this is further evidence of Western interference and malevolence. It is also, as one critic puts it, the continuation of a

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<sup>6</sup> For an account of Russian economic 'reform', see Lloyd (15 August 1999); Stiglitz (1999); Gray (1998a), chapter 6; and Wedel (2000).

<sup>7</sup> Sazonov (6 December 1994).

<sup>8</sup> See Wedel (2000).

<sup>9</sup> See Sakwa (1993), p. 215.

<sup>10</sup> Wedel (2000).



‘consistent pattern of favouring capitalism over democracy in American foreign policy’.<sup>11</sup>

The failure of the domestic reform programme had a negative impact on the foreign policy not least because the two were so closely connected. The liberal Westernisers were caught in their own ‘linkage’ trap. They had presented their programme as a coherent whole, with domestic reforms contributing to and reinforced by developments in foreign policy, but the failure of ‘shock therapy’ discredited the foreign policy to which it was explicitly linked.<sup>12</sup> Russia did not become a strong, liberal, capitalist power. This discredited the liberal internationalist aspect of the foreign policy.

### **Failure to develop a strategic partnership**

The institutionalist aspect of the foreign policy – as well as the liberal internationalist aspect – was also discredited, by the failures of Western policy in particular. There was a unique opportunity in the post-Cold War world, with a pro-Western reforming government in Russia, to transform the European security structure, to build institutions that could implement and enforce international law and would involve Russia on an equal basis. This opportunity was missed. For example, when the Russian MFA began to deal more attentively with the former Soviet Union, it promoted an institutionalist policy that recognised the fully-sovereign status of the states of the former Soviet Union and, while encouraging links and recognising inter-dependency, consciously sought to act within the framework of international law and norms.<sup>13</sup> But attempts by the Russian Foreign Ministry to involve the CSCE and the United Nations in mediation of ethnic conflicts in the former Soviet Union, for example, met with little response.<sup>14</sup> Russia was therefore forced to act unilaterally.

Instead of developing partnership and acting to promote human rights in the former Soviet Union, in 1992 the European Community concentrated primarily on greater internal integration through Maastricht. Even worse, Western policy makers began to search for a new purpose for NATO, and to consider taking in new members among the former Warsaw Pact states, rather than seeking a true partnership with Russia. Russian objections to NATO expansion were perfectly legitimate. NATO is a military and political alliance that was established to oppose the Soviet Union, the state which the Russian Federation legally succeeded. There is no realistic prospect of Russia joining

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<sup>11</sup> Mahoney (23 March 2000).

<sup>12</sup> For a similar argument, see Matveyev (1995); and G. Arbatov (1994).

<sup>13</sup> See Kozyrev (1992b).

<sup>14</sup> It should be recognised, however, that an additional problem was that the Defence Ministry and the armed forces were following a more interventionist and hegemonic policy, thus arousing suspicions of neo-imperialism. This was another negative consequence of the MFA’s failure to focus on the ‘near abroad’ earlier, such that the military were able to set the policy line in the former Soviet Union.



the alliance. NATO expansion is often seen as an attempt to exclude Russia from 'Europe', particularly because the new members regard NATO membership as a means of gaining membership of the European Union and moving the focus of economic relations away from Russia and towards the West. The dominant feeling in Russia is that the West took advantage of Russian weakness – including, according to Gorbachev, abrogating a verbal agreement made when the Soviet leadership agreed to accept German unification, not to expand NATO into Central and Eastern Europe<sup>15</sup> – to push Russia out of its traditional spheres of interest. This feeling undoubtedly contributed to a more assertive Russian policy.

### **Political calculations**

Domestic opponents attacked the Kozyrev foreign policy partly because they rejected its premises. Nationalists and communists opposed Russian subservience to the Cold War enemy and wanted an authoritarian state with an assertive foreign policy (the 'negative' of official policy). Neo-realists believed that the leadership was allowing the West to weaken Russia and drive it from areas of traditional economic and strategic interest. But there was also a political dimension: opponents in the Supreme Soviet attacked the official foreign policy because it was a means of attacking the government in the institutional power struggle between the administration and the parliament. Furthermore, they hoped to gain electoral advantage by playing on popular sentiments of wounded pride.

But rather than defending the foreign policy on its own grounds, the administration adopted a more assertive realist approach in order to assuage criticism of the whole policy approach. The result was a policy not of social democratic institutionalism, but of anarcho-capitalism in the economic sphere, state-centred authoritarianism in the political sphere, and neo-realism in the foreign policy sphere. While not the worst of all possible worlds – that would have resulted from the pursuit also of an extreme nationalist policy of the kind practised by Serbia – it was perhaps the second worst.

### **Post-1992 foreign policy**

There are two defining features of Russian foreign policy after the initial liberal internationalist phase: a greater assertiveness within the 'near abroad', and an emphasis on Russia's great power status beyond it. As we have seen, the latter concept can be part of a liberal internationalist approach, and was emphasised by Kozyrev throughout 1992. But it also has a specific meaning within neo-realist theory.

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<sup>15</sup> Volkov (1997), p. 63; confirmed also by former US Ambassador to Moscow, Jack Matlock; see Hearst (15 February 1997).



## Russian neo-realist great power concepts

We saw in chapter 1 that neo-realists believe that the ‘structure’ of the international system in any period is defined by the number of ‘poles’, that is the number of great powers. Most neo-realists argue that the Cold War bi-polar system is evolving into a multi-polar system, possibly through a transitional ‘uni-polar’ stage (with the United States as the single ‘pole’). Where does Russia fit into this analysis? There is a difference of opinion between those commentators, policy makers, and politicians who believe that Russia has the potential – on account of its size, population, and resources – to be one of the great powers that constitute the multi-polar world, and those who believe that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia can expect to be only a ‘middle-echelon’ power given its actual level of economic development and the lack of state stability. Therefore, some neo-realists who opposed the early liberal Westernising policy also argue that the post-1992 policy is misguided because it is based on the notion that Russia is a top-level great power; they argue that Russia is not sufficiently strong economically at present to play a global role, and should concentrate resources on preserving and re-building the Russian Federation itself.

Others argue that Russian policy should be aimed at establishing its great power status. This does not follow necessarily from neo-realist theory, because in that theory the number of poles is considered an objective fact; hence Russia’s great power status cannot be created merely by insisting on it.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, many policy makers and commentators assume that Russia *is* a great power and that it needs to prove this after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This has gradually developed into the doctrine of multi-polarism, of resisting an international system dominated by the United States. The shift from liberal internationalism to neo-realism in Russian foreign policy is marked by a shift from insistence on Russia’s *duties/responsibilities* as a great power to Russia’s *rights* as a great power.

If there is a shift to a multi-polar world, then each great power which constitutes one of the ‘poles’ will dominate its own region. This gives us a distinction between ‘regional’ and ‘global’ powers, where the latter are those that can exert influence in regions other than their own. Russian realists argue that Russia is a regional power both in the region of the former Soviet Union, and in Europe. In other words, it is a ‘Eurasian’ power. But they also claim that Russia is a global great power. I shall argue that Russian policy makers after 1992 viewed the conflicts in former Yugoslavia in both of these ways: as a conflict with global implications that Russia – as one of the world’s

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<sup>16</sup> Adomeit (1995).



great powers – must be involved in resolving, but also as a conflict within a region of Russian interests.

### **Post-1992 policy in the ‘near abroad’, the former ‘outer empire’, and the ‘far abroad’**

We have seen that early Russian foreign policy relatively neglected the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union partly as a result of the rhetoric of partnership with the West. Whatever the theoretical underpinning of foreign policy, Russian policy soon had to shift the focus of attention to the ‘near abroad’. But when this occurred, it was soon associated not only with a shift in focus, but a shift in approach. A Russian ‘Monroe Doctrine’ was adopted, by which the ‘near abroad’ was considered to be an area of vital interests in which Russia would exert hegemony. As part of the realist outlook, there was often a zero-sum belief in great power rivalry in the region, and Russian policy makers sought to minimise influence by other regional or global powers. For example, they no longer asked for the CSCE to become directly involved in peace-keeping; instead, Yeltsin called on international institutions such as the CSCE or UN to grant Russia special powers as guarantor of peace and stability in the regions of the former Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> And the Caspian Sea region and the Transcaucasus became the focus for rivalry between Western powers and Russia for access to the gas and oil reserves and routes for their transportation. This was played as a zero-sum struggle – a new ‘great game’ – by all of the powers involved.

Hence, the former Soviet space was not only recognised as an area of vital Russian interests – something which would be accepted by liberal internationalists as well as realists – but Russia also sought an hegemonic influence within it. This is a result partly of the realist attack on the liberal internationalist policy originally pursued, and partly of the lack of response by Western powers and international institutions to the problems of minority rights and ethnic conflict in the region. To a certain extent, Russia was fulfilling a necessary role in filling the security vacuum in the region. The Military Doctrine that was approved in November 1993, for example, describes one of the main principles of Russia’s policy in the sphere of military security ‘to maintain stability in regions bordering on the Russian Federation’.<sup>18</sup>

After 1992, the Yeltsin administration also began to emphasise Russian security interests in the former ‘outer empire’ – the former Warsaw Pact region of Central and Eastern Europe. For example, the Military Doctrine stated among its guidelines for

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<sup>17</sup> *Russia TV* (28 February 1993).

<sup>18</sup> *The Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation* (1993).



ensuring the military security of the Russian Federation: 'to develop mutually advantageous military co-operation with foreign states, above all with states belonging to the Commonwealth of Independent States and countries of Central and Eastern Europe.' But the main issue was NATO expansion into the region. Initially, NATO created the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme in order to show its concern for the security of the former Eastern bloc states without promising membership. The PfP programme also included Russia and provide a basis for military co-operation with it. However, Central/Eastern European states, particularly Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, regarded the programme as a poor substitute for membership of NATO, and lobbied for accession, particularly after the success of Vladimir Zhirinovskii's extreme nationalist Liberal Democratic Party in the Russian Duma elections of December 1993. Crucially, towards the end of 1993, the Clinton administration itself began to favour NATO expansion and it was supported by the German Defence Ministry. NATO expansion was then considered a real option.<sup>19</sup>

Russian diplomats responded by warning against a new division of Europe. They portrayed NATO expansion as potentially threatening to Russia's security and vital interests. For example, among the 'main existing and potential sources of military threat outside the Russian Federation', the Military Doctrine included the 'expansion of military blocs and alliances to the detriment of the interests of the military security of the Russian Federation'. Members of the administration also argued that NATO expansion would benefit the nationalist-communist forces in Russia.

NATO's decision to accept new members was, as I have suggested, a factor in the adoption of a neo-realist foreign policy in Russia. Nevertheless, the Yeltsin administration rejected calls from the nationalist-communist opposition and hard-line zero-sum realists to end co-operative relations with the West. Russian policy makers continued to assume that co-operative relations could exist, if not the strategic partnership that they had assumed in the liberal internationalist phase. But they insisted that Russia must be treated as an equal power, and argued that Russia itself had distinct interests from the West. This was to have a significant effect on policy towards Yugoslavia.

Russian diplomats wanted the other major European powers and the United States to recognise Russia's great power status and its equality with them. In policy outside the 'near abroad' and the former 'outer empire', the main aim of Russian foreign policy makers after 1992 was to establish Russia's credentials as a global great power. Although the abandonment of ideological struggle with capitalism has reduced Russian

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<sup>19</sup> Duncan (1996).



involvement in many areas of the world (such as in Southern Africa), Russian diplomats still want Russia to have an influence in world affairs commensurate with its supposed 'great power' status. In practice, this means involvement in areas of crisis, through diplomatic measures to find peace or through peace-keeping.

## **Eurasianism, pan-[Orthodox] Slavism, and ethnic nationalism**

Some Russian critics of the official foreign policy have been described as 'Eurasianists'. However, Eurasianism is a misleading term because it refers to two distinct approaches. On the one hand, some commentators have used it to refer to the theory that – due to its geo-political position as part of both Europe and Asia – Russia has interests distinct from those of the Western powers; this could be called political Eurasianism. I have already suggested that there is nothing controversial about this claim, and that recognising it is essential for a successful Russian foreign policy. On the other hand, there is a *cultural* aspect of the term. It was originally used in the 1920s by a group of Russian émigrés, who claimed that because of its unique culture, Russia has a specific role to play in world affairs. In this can be seen an echo of the idea of Moscow as the 'Third Rome'.

Cultural Eurasianism seeks a return to the Russian empire after the Soviet period (which is interpreted as an alien application of Western European rationalism and materialism). The Russian empire is viewed as a unifier of Orthodox and Islamic peoples. The political implication of these views is that policy makers should promote a re-integration of the peoples of the Russian empire/Soviet Union, and that they should reject the Western model – democracy, market economy, and materialism – and re-build instead a society consistent with Eurasian culture: communal at the local level, paternalistic or authoritarian at the state level. 'Neo-imperialists' may also seek re-integration of the former Soviet Union, but by force if necessary, and more on the basis of Russian domination.

Pan-Slavists also see Russia as different from the West. However, unlike Eurasianists, they emphasise the Slav nature of much of the Russian empire. They advocate a foreign policy orientated to the development of close relations with other Slav states (realists may also favour this sort of approach as a basis for finding allies). Pan-Orthodox Slavists adopt the same approach, but directed towards the Orthodox Slav states. Some pan-Slavists may be more radical, advocating the creation of a Slav state – a Slavonic union – incorporating the Eastern Slav populations of the former Soviet Union; pan-Orthodox Slavists might want a union incorporating the Orthodox Slav populations of Eurasia.



Pan-[Orthodox] Slavism can be viewed as an application of Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' theory. In Huntington's formulation, the 'Slavic-Orthodox' is one of the major civilisations. He contends that Russia occupies a pivotal position as the natural leader of Orthodox Christian civilisation:

Despite the fact that Russia remains a secular state and the majority of Russians, as with the majority in the West, hold secular views, Russia simultaneously remains a pivotal state of one of the basic world civilisations, historically identified with Orthodox Christianity... As a pivotal state Russia bears a fundamental responsibility for the support of order and stability among Orthodox states and peoples.<sup>20</sup>

Once again, there is no clear reason why any of this should be the case.<sup>21</sup> It is obvious that a policy derived from this viewpoint will lead to accusations of neo-imperialism, particularly since some Orthodox Slav states (such as Bulgaria) experienced this 'responsibility' after the Second World War.

A third radical programme with implications for the borders in the former Soviet space is ethnic nationalism. The liberal Westernisers were civic nationalists. They sought to create a multi-national, secular, non-imperial state on the basis of inclusive citizenship within the existing borders of the Russian Federation. In contrast, ethnic nationalists want to create an ethnic nation-state, in other words a Russia for ethnic Russians, or Russian-speakers. This is an exclusive notion of citizenship, based on the concept of a nation defined by its ethnicity, its language, and its religion. It differs from Eurasianism in that it wants to create an ethnic nation-state rather than a multi-cultural empire, and from pan-[Orthodox] Slavism in its focus on the narrower concepts of Russian ethnicity and language, rather than 'Slavonic-ness' and Orthodoxy. The policy implications are most apparent in relation to the 'near abroad'. Ethnic nationalists would like to integrate those areas of the former Soviet Union with majority Russian populations into the Russian Federation to form a 'Greater Russia'. Unlike Eurasianists, however, Russian ethnic nationalists may be more willing to allow non-Orthodox, non-Russian populated areas of the Russian Federation to secede; but they may also hope to remove the non-Russian population from the country.

There are clearly similarities between these issues and the issues facing post-communist leaders in former Yugoslavia. In the following chapter, I shall discuss the links between the post-Soviet and the post-Yugoslav environments, and examine the

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<sup>20</sup> Huntington (1995), p. 135.

<sup>21</sup> For a detailed criticism of the application of Huntington's notions to Russia, see Kandelj (1996a).

application to Russian policy towards the conflicts in former Yugoslavia of the various foreign policy approaches that I have outlined.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Russian perceptions of the Yugoslav conflicts**

While the Yugoslav conflicts of 1991 to 1995 were not an issue of huge concern among the general population in Russia, they became an issue of great importance in political circles, more so than in the West. This was partly because of domestic political developments: the conflicts were seen as an issue on which the government could be attacked effectively, which was particularly significant during the struggle for power between parliament and presidency. But the conflicts in former Yugoslavia raised issues of what kind of foreign policy the Russian Federation should pursue now that the ideological basis of the Cold War had disappeared. And there was also an extra level that was of much less significance within the West: the parallel between the situation in former Yugoslavia and the situation in the former Soviet Union and the Russian Federation itself.

#### **The Yugoslav conflicts and the post-Cold War international framework**

For liberal Westernisers in the Russian government, the Yugoslav crisis provided the opportunity to demonstrate Russia's 'liberal democratic' credentials and to forge a 'strategic partnership' with Western liberal democratic states. In relation to the conflicts themselves, 'democratic, capitalist Russia' could not be expected to support an ethnic nationalist, communist Serbia. It was in Russia's interests to control and limit the conflicts in co-operation with its Western partners. The inclusion of Russia in mediation efforts would act not only as a balancing force, preventing any potential bias, but would also serve to demonstrate Russia's great power credentials (as I have already argued, this concept is not exclusive to realism/neo-realism, and we have seen the importance that Andrei Kozyrev himself attached to it). Furthermore, the Yugoslav crisis provided an opportunity for co-ordination through international organisations that would promote the development of an institutionalist 'new world order'; but this co-ordination must be through institutions that included Russia, preferably the CSCE and the United Nations. In this institutionalist context, the use of sanctions and even force could not be ruled out, but should be used only as a last resort. The development of international humanitarian law, even into the domain previously considered the internal affairs of the sovereign state, was also to be welcomed.

Such developments are resisted resolutely by neo-realists, for whom state sovereignty is one of the foundations of the international system. From a realist viewpoint, intervention in local ethnic conflicts such as those in former Yugoslavia should be kept to a minimum, and morality should not spur the 'international community' to become too involved. It was often accepted that the strongest side would be allowed to win, and that this was the natural outcome. According to Igor Zevelev and Sharyl Cross, some politicians and intellectuals in Russia believed that

external involvement in the crisis under the auspices of the UN has only prolonged the war. Otherwise, the Serbs would have won long ago, and the map of the former Yugoslavia would have been reshaped to appropriately reflect the balance of forces.<sup>1</sup>

International action might be necessary, particularly to prevent a spill-over of the fighting and the drawing in of major powers, but a great power concert on the nineteenth century model would be preferable to the involvement of a wider international institution. Kirill Benediktov, for instance, suggests that a Balkan 'Security Council' should be formed.<sup>2</sup> Whichever institution is used – be it the UNSC, the Contact Group, or the G8 – it must consist of a small number of major powers, and it must include Russia; the worst scenario is for Russia to be pushed aside, to be excluded from conflict resolution and peace enforcement.

The implications of the Yugoslav conflicts for the framework of the post-Cold War world may lead to more instrumentalist calculations. For instance, the evolution of European institutions is significant for the disputes in the former Soviet Union, and while neo-realists would prefer Russia to have the main responsibility for the 'near abroad', liberal internationalists might be more amenable to an OSCE role in that region, as in former Yugoslavia. Also, for the liberal Westernisers, co-operation with the West over the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, by demonstrating Russia's pro-Western orientation, might bring significant benefits for Russia in terms of trade and aid. Hence, policy may take an instrumentalist form in which the approach to the Yugoslav conflicts is determined by the aim of achieving goals in a different area. Neo-realists, regarding this as humiliating subservience to the West and believing that interests should be derived directly from geo-political position, are adamantly opposed to such an approach (as we shall see in the sanctions debate). For instance, Elena Gus'kova, head of the Centre for the Study of the Contemporary Balkans Crisis at the

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<sup>1</sup> Zevelev and Cross (1997), p. 264.

<sup>2</sup> Benediktov (1998).



Institute for Slavonic and Balkan Studies (Russian Academy of Sciences, RAN) criticises official Russian policy to the Yugoslav conflicts for having 'tactics, but no strategy'.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, neo-realists might seek to use the crisis in another instrumentalist form: to establish Russia's great power credentials and to insist on Russia's rights as a great power. The idea is that Russia has an interest in using the conflicts to achieve the goal of establishing its great power status and preventing the development of a uni-polar system, that is American global hegemony. And it should prevent any developments in relation to former Yugoslavia – such as military intervention by NATO – that would be contrary to Russian interests elsewhere, in particular in the former Soviet space and the Russian Federation itself.

The insistence on Russia's rights as a great power often sounded tautological, in the sense that the chief 'right' which Russia claimed as a great power in relation to the Yugoslav crisis was the right to be recognised as a great power. I shall argue that, after 1992, attempts were made to 'create' Russian interests in the Balkans distinct from Western interests there, in order to show that Russia must be taken into account in conflict resolution. However, most neo-realists genuinely believe that Russia does have strategic and economic interests in the Balkans, and they view the Yugoslav conflicts in this regional context.

## **Russia's interests in the Balkans**

### **Strategic interests**

Events in former Yugoslavia cannot be said to threaten directly the security of the Russian Federation. Most commentators would agree that the expanse of the former Soviet Union, in three distinct areas – Eastern European, Transcaucasus, and Central Asia – is more significant for Russia than the Balkans are, but some analysts and politicians remain convinced that the Balkans as a whole are also important for Russian security.

Those who tend towards traditional realism may emphasise the strategic importance of the Straits (the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles). Historically, the Straits were believed to be the key to defending Russia's 'soft underbelly'; Russia's vulnerability was demonstrated during the Crimean War and by the British incursion into the Black Sea during the civil war. Both the Soviet authorities and their Tsarist predecessors sought to gain control of the Straits – or at least to secure a favourable

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<sup>3</sup> Interview with Gus'kova (4 June 1998).



regime – in order to prevent access to the Black Sea by the navies of other great powers. After the Second World War, the Straits gained strategic importance as the warm water outlet for the Black Sea Fleet as the Soviet Union developed a navy capable of global reach.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, the advent of nuclear weapons and the growing importance of air power perhaps diminished the relative military significance of the Straits.

The Soviet authorities were clearer than their Tsarist predecessors in differentiating strategically between the Balkans and the Straits.<sup>5</sup> The Tsarist preoccupation with the Straits had led it to seek influence in the Balkans, particularly through Bulgaria. However, Russian policy became trapped in a vicious circle. Geo-political considerations supposedly necessitated Balkan commitments in order to control the Straits. But the defence and expansion of those commitments in the Balkans created tensions with rival European powers and led to wars, one of which, the Crimean War, brought about the very invasion launched through the Straits that the Balkan policy was supposed to prevent. Defeat led to an increased pre-occupation with the importance of the Straits, which entailed more activity in the Balkans, eventually leading to Russian involvement in World War One and the subsequent collapse of the Tsarist empire.

This indicates the flaw in the strategy of attempting to gain control of the Straits through control of parts of the Balkans. But it also demonstrates the problem of getting trapped in a realist zero-sum struggle for strategic goals, particularly when the state is not sufficiently strong economically to pursue such commitments. Even before the First World War, the economic and human costs of wars with Turkey that resulted from Russia's Balkan commitments vastly outweighed the gains and hindered Russia's development.<sup>6</sup> Russia was too weak domestically to succeed in its Balkan operations, and those operations contributed to its domestic weakness because of the cost.

Despite these lessons, some realist commentators continue to think in such a way. For instance, Nadia Arbatova of the Institute of World Economic and International Relations (IMEMO, RAN) suggests that, with the loss of Ukraine, and the disputes over the Black Sea Fleet, Russia is now even weaker on its Black Sea coastline; she argues that the Straits have, therefore, retained their strategic significance because of Russian vulnerability.<sup>7</sup>

The other supposed Russian strategic interest in the Balkans relates to the danger of a land invasion: the Balkans could be used as a base for an invasion of Russia. This was

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<sup>4</sup> Arbatova (1996), pp. 404-5.

<sup>5</sup> Lederer (1962a), p. 423.

<sup>6</sup> Jelavich (1991), conclusion. Jelavich points out that those who supported reform at home, particularly the Finance Ministers, opposed an adventurous Balkan policy.

<sup>7</sup> Arbatova (1996), p. 409.



demonstrated in June 1941 when the southern army of the three-pronged German attack invaded the Soviet Union (Ukraine) from Romania. Elena Gus'kova uses this fact to argue that Russia still has strategic interests in the Balkans.<sup>8</sup> Connected with this is the argument that the Belgrade revolt delayed the launch of Operation Barbarossa, with crucial consequences for that campaign. According to Arbatova, 'the old generation of Russians cannot forget ... that the uprising in Belgrade in 1941 delayed the Germans and they reached Moscow late in autumn,'<sup>9</sup> thus getting caught by the Russian winter. Many historians, however, now question the significance of this delay. J. Grenville, for instance, suggests that, since it took less than two weeks to overcome Yugoslav resistance, 'the military diversion was too slight to affect significantly the time it took to assemble the huge build-up of men, equipment and supplies for the Russian invasion'.<sup>10</sup> And James Gow refers to his own discussion with Aleksandr Korsik, First Secretary at the Russian Embassy in London, who also highlighted the Russian perception of the significance of the Belgrade revolt, but stressed that it was 'an emotional response rather than one based on objective analysis'.<sup>11</sup>

Given Russia's new borders, and the independence of Ukraine, the danger of invasion through the Balkans is now at still one more remove (see map 1). And any new attempts to gain control of the Straits would be doomed to fail. Hence, there are no clear-cut strategic interests for Russia in the Balkans that require an assertive, zero-sum approach. This does not mean, however, that neo-realist politicians and policy makers do not perceive there to be such interests.

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<sup>8</sup> Interview with Gus'kova (4 June 1998).

<sup>9</sup> Arbatova (1995), p. 51.

<sup>10</sup> Grenville (1980), p. 489.

<sup>11</sup> Gow (1997a), p. 188.



**Map 1** Europe in the 1990s

## Economic interests

For the post-communist Russian Federation, trade will be important from the viewpoint of both neo-realism and liberal internationalism. Neo-realism emphasises the importance of trade in defining a state's great power credentials, while liberal internationalism is built on the idea of states trading freely with each other and competing freely for markets; a state's prosperity will be a measure of its success in this regard.

Nevertheless, the degree to which the Balkans and former Yugoslavia constitute potentially lucrative markets for Russia is a matter of dispute. Many commentators assume that the Balkans region as a whole, and former Yugoslavia in particular, is a natural Russian market because of its proximity to the Russian Federation and because of the historical links between it and Russia. This would mean, for instance, that economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (the FRY, consisting of Serbia and Montenegro) have cost Russia dearly since May 1992; as we shall see, this factual issue became a matter of dispute even between different government ministries.



There are reasons to suppose that the claims of strong Russian economic interests in the Balkans are at best optimistic. The historical record is not convincing; although nineteenth century Russia had close military and cultural links with Balkan states seeking and gaining independence from the Ottoman empire, trade was limited. Trade was even lower between the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia during the Cold War because of the Tito-Stalin split. Despite a resurgence in the 1980s, the level of Russian-Yugoslav trade had again dropped in the period immediately prior to the imposition of sanctions.<sup>12</sup>

Liberal internationalism in particular plays down the significance of historical and cultural links as a basis for trade, and neo-realists would also recognise that economic logic is the main determinant. There is no reason to assume that the Balkans region in general, and Yugoslavia in particular, is a 'natural' trading partner of the Russian Federation. As Pavel Kandel' of the Institute of Europe (RAN) writes with regard to the prevalence of the German mark in the FRY: 'The logic of economics turns out stronger than political sympathies and antipathies'. He goes on to argue that:

There is no serious basis to suppose that the removal of sanctions can change the situation in Russian-Yugoslav economic relations, which arose long before the Yugoslav crisis. Inherited problems (a structure of commodity circulation unfavourable for Russia, difficulties with calculations, the smaller capacity of the FRY market, outside of which are situated the most industrially developed republics of the SFRY – Slovenia and Croatia) will also in the future hamper the development of trade-economic links between Russia and the new Yugoslavia.

Hence, he concludes that 'the actual economic interests of Russia in the FRY and the real possibilities of the Russian economy in this market are much more modest than the rhetoric about them'.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, there are at least two areas in which trade can be expected to flourish. First, there is the supply of natural gas. This has already led Russia into the Balkans through its pipeline to Greece, and Russia has also supplied gas to all sides in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Second, there are arms sales, which have the potential to destabilise the region, and became a matter of particular controversy with regard to Cyprus. A third area in which the Balkans as a whole are held to be of future economic significance is connected with the export of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea.

The announcement by Turkey in 1994 that it wanted to review the article of the 1936 Montreux Convention on the regime of the Straits in order to reduce the size of

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<sup>12</sup> Kandel' (1996b), p. 18; and *Moscow Home Service* (9 April 1991).

<sup>13</sup> Kandel' (1996b), p. 19.

tankers travelling through them alarmed Russian commentators and diplomats. Some commentators suggested that it directly threatened Russian trade interests, particularly the shipping of Caspian oil. For example, Stephen Larrabee of the International Policy Department of the RAND Corporation comments that

the official reason for the restrictions was to prevent ecological damage. While ecological factors undoubtedly did play a role, geo-strategic factors appear to have been far more important... The new restrictions give Turkey important leverage over Russia's ability to transport Central Asian oil and over the overall development of the energy sector in Central Asia.<sup>14</sup>

It was because of the precariousness of access to the Straits that a scheme was proposed to build a pipe-line from the Black Sea coast of Bulgaria to the Greek port of Alexandroupolis.<sup>15</sup> According to Kandel', this makes the Balkans, from the Russian perspective, inseparably linked with the Transcaucasus and Central Asian regions of the former Soviet Union:

Russia's Balkan interests turn out to be connected inseparably with its vitally important interests in the post-Soviet space, they have a fully material basis and strategic significance.<sup>16</sup>

Neo-realists point out with relish that the old Straits issue is connected with the new 'great game' surrounding Caspian oil and gas, giving rise to Russian 'geo-strategic' interests in the Balkans. As Stephen Larrabee puts it:

Russia's larger interests in Central Asia and the Caucasus give it a strong incentive to remain engaged in the Balkans. These interests extend beyond vague feelings of Slav solidarity with Serbia. They involve important geopolitical and economic interests associated with Russia's broader goals in Central Asia and the Caucasus.<sup>17</sup>

The supposed linkage of the Balkans with Central Asia and the Caucasus also feeds into the neo-realist idea of regional rivalry.

## **Regional rivalry**

Rivalry is seen to exist with three groups of powers. Firstly, neo-realists believe that there will be rivalry with other regional powers – Turkey and Iran – in the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, and the Balkans. Thus these regions are linked through

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<sup>14</sup> Larrabee (1996), p. 401.

<sup>15</sup> See Tsekhmistrenko (1996); and Larrabee (1996), pp. 401-2.

<sup>16</sup> Kandel' (1996b), pp. 24-25.

<sup>17</sup> Larrabee (1996), p. 402.



this rivalry for influence, as well as through the issue of Caspian oil. As Arbatova writes:

The emergence of newly independent states and new regional 'superpowers' (Turkey, Iran) with a strong propensity to fill the geo-political vacuum in the regional balance of power after the end of the US-Soviet bipolarity significantly reinforced the regional interdependence. Thus Eastern Mediterranean, South Eastern Europe and Central Asia became parts of one geo-political space.<sup>18</sup>

Turkey is seen as attempting to seek influence in Muslim and Turkic-speaking former Soviet republics. Hence there is an ethnic-religious dimension; while this does not mean that there is a full 'clash of civilisations', it is supposed that regional powers can use links based on language, religion, and ethnicity to increase their influence. With Turkey perceived as supporting Muslims in Bosnia, it has been suggested that an 'arc of Islam' is being established, stretching from Albania, through Bosnia and Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey, to the Northern Caucasus, Central Asia, and Afghanistan.<sup>19</sup> In response, Russia should seek allies in those states which also feel threatened by this: Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, and Serbia.<sup>20</sup> Hence, from the perspective of regional great power competition, a policy is derived for Russia in relation to the Yugoslav crisis.

The second area of rivalry is in relation to Western European states; the latter may be perceived as rivals with Russia for influence in the Balkans as they were before the First World War. Although Russia may have common interests with Western European states in containing and curtailing the wars in former Yugoslavia, traditional realists may be suspicious of, for example, German policy, particularly considering the German government's pressure for early recognition of Slovenian and Croatian independence (chapter 4).

According to neo-realists, such regional rivalry is natural and Russia should define clearly, and pursue resolutely, its own interests in this situation; otherwise it will lose in the race for influence. Arbatova, for instance, argues:

One of Russia's central foreign policy challenges in the new geopolitical situation was posed by the emergence of regional centres of power – i.e. Germany, Turkey and Iran – capable of expanding their influence over the unstable zones of the former Soviet Union. All these countries became involved, although in different

<sup>18</sup> Arbatova (1998a), p. 196; see also Larrabee (1996).

<sup>19</sup> Larrabee (1996), p. 401.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Nadia Arbatova argues that Greece and Bulgaria are natural allies for Russia; Arbatova (1996), p. 408; see also Larrabee (1996), p. 401.

ways, in the Yugoslav conflict. Turkey, a main actor in the Balkans, began to look toward re-establishing influence in the region and expanding it to the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union... For post-unification Germany, the Yugoslav conflict presented an opportunity to play a major role in European politics. Iran, now competing with Turkey in the former Soviet Muslim republics, became involved because of its ambitions in and commitments to the Muslim world... It is quite logical that these states should also define their interests in the context of the conflict in former Yugoslavia and take positions consistent with those interests. But there is no logic to Russia's failure to formulate its own objectives in the region.<sup>21</sup>

This is a straightforward expression of realism, in which Russia should maximise its power wherever possible and minimise the power of other states.

In the third area of rivalry, neo-realists increasingly perceived the United States, and the American-dominated NATO, as seeking hegemony in the Balkans to the exclusion of Russia. As we shall see, this led many Russian commentators and politicians to accuse NATO of using the Yugoslav conflicts to create a new *raison d'être* for the alliance as well as to expand into the Balkans and secure a sphere of influence there, just as it was doing elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe. Neo-realists called on the Russian government to direct their policy towards resisting such developments. This might involve supporting those states that were also hostile to NATO, primarily Serbia.

Some realists argue further that Russia should support Serbia because of historical, religious, and ethnic links.

## **Pan-[Orthodox] Slavism**

Pan-Slavists believe that Russia should support other Slav nations. In the conflicts in Bosnia and Croatia, however, the leading protagonists were all Slavs. Nevertheless, taking into account religious affinity, there were calls for Russia to support the Serbs because they are Slav and – as a generalisation – Orthodox. Supposedly, there were historical links between Russians and Serbs based on this ethno-religious affinity and there were many calls for Russia to support its 'traditional ally'.

This historical assumption was deep-rooted, even within the administration. For example, when I interviewed an MFA official, he began by stating:

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<sup>21</sup> Arbatova (1997a), p. 465.



As you will realise, Yugoslavia has always been traditionally and historically our major partner in the Balkans.<sup>22</sup>

Yet this is simply not true. For forty years after 1948, the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) regarded the Soviet Union as its greatest threat. In the inter-war period, official relations between the Soviet Union and all of the Balkan states were negligible, primarily for ideological reasons. Even before the First World War, relations between Russia and Serbia varied over time. Certainly, there were links based on common religion and ethnicity and there was a perception of having a common enemy, first in the Ottoman empire, and then in the Habsburg empire. But the historical record is more complex.

Firstly, both the Tsarist administration and the Balkan leaders placed their own interests foremost. As we have seen, Russia's main interest in the Balkans was strategic: control of the Straits. Two contradictory policies were pursued to achieve this, sometimes simultaneously by different members of the diplomatic service. At times, Russian policy supported the independence movements of the Balkan nations in the belief that this would give it influence once the nations had gained independence. At other times, Russia aimed to preserve the weak Ottoman empire, from which it was able to extract concessions and exert influence; it was feared that in the event of Ottoman collapse, other powers would gain control of the Straits, or a major war might break out for control of them.

Even when Russia did support the Balkan nations, this was fraught with problems. Since these nations were in competition for control of territory, it was impossible to support all of them equally in their aims; nor was it possible to choose the Slav, Orthodox nation when – as was the case with Serbia and Bulgaria – both nations were Slav and Orthodox. Russia generally favoured Bulgaria because it provided more direct access to the Straits. For example, even after Russia had supported the Serbs in their struggle against the Ottoman empire in 1876-78, the Russian-brokered treaty of San Stefano would have created (had it been implemented) a Greater Bulgaria, upsetting the local balance of power and frustrating the ambitions of Greece and Serbia in Macedonia (as well as Romania, which lost southern Bessarabia).<sup>23</sup> When the Serbs protested, they 'were informed bluntly that Russia's interests came first, Bulgaria's second, and Serbia's last'.<sup>24</sup> Serbia subsequently looked to Austria-Hungary to further its interests,

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with representative of MFA (1 July 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Lederer (1962a), p. 435.

<sup>24</sup> Stavrianos (1958), p. 409.

effectively moving into its sphere of influence, and it was only after 1907 that Serbia again appealed to Russia.

Russian policy in the nineteenth century was not motivated purely by self-interest; there was genuine ideological support for the Slav and Orthodox Balkan nations. But, once again, the historical record is complex. Certainly, there was a surge of popular sympathy for the Serbs and Bulgarians in the 1870s, particularly in response to massacres of the latter by Ottoman forces, and this influenced the Tsar's decision to fight Turkey. Successive Tsars also felt bound by treaty obligations and a sense of personal honour to protect the Balkan nations. Nicholas II stated in his manifesto on 3 August 1914:

Today it is not only the protection of a country related to us and unjustly attacked that must be accorded, but we must safeguard the honour, the dignity, and the integrity of Russia and her position among the great powers.<sup>25</sup>

But there was also a further manifestation of ideology in the Tsarist foreign policy: at various times in the nineteenth century, the Tsar strongly resisted change. This was particularly true of Nicholas I. Nicholas Riasanovsky writes that Nicholas I was 'determined to maintain and defend the existing order in Europe, just as he considered it his sacred duty to preserve the archaic system in his own country'; this 'conservative and legitimist orientation' represented the very opposite of the messianic role that the pan-Slavists envisaged for Russia.<sup>26</sup> As a result, Tsarist Russia at times worked in concert with other autocratic states, in particular the other key multi-national European empire, Austria, to withstand progressivism. So, in August 1849, Russian troops helped to put down the uprising in Hungary, thus re-establishing stability within Russia's main rival in the Balkans. At the same time, Russia carried out similar actions in the Ottoman possessions, demonstrating that ideological as well as strategic considerations lay behind the policy of upholding the Ottoman empire.<sup>27</sup>

Thus, just as the two strategic approaches contradicted each other, so did the two ideological principles. It is wrong therefore to suppose that Russia always supported the Balkan Slav and Orthodox nations (and Serbia in particular) in their fight for independence from the Ottoman empire. Again, this does not mean that there are not wide-spread perceptions in Russia (and Serbia) that there is a history of strong links; whatever the reality of Russian-Serbian relations in the nineteenth century, the truth

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Jelavich (1991), p. 275; for a discussion of the influence of notions of 'honour', see *ibid.*, conclusion, and Glover (1999), chapter 21.

<sup>26</sup> Riasanovsky (1974), pp. xxiii, xxxiii.

<sup>27</sup> Jelavich (1991), p. 110.



does not diminish the potency of the myth of eternal friendship.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, present day pan-[Orthodox] Slavists might attack the government for not offering the Serbs sufficient support, just as their predecessors did in the 1870s.

Liberal internationalists would, of course, reject a policy based on such an approach; although they might support intervention on behalf of the oppressed or persecuted, this would not be because of religious or ethnic affinity but because of universal moral duty and international legal – not just narrow treaty – obligations. Neo-realists would also oppose an ideological pan-Slavic/pan-Orthodox Slavic policy, although they might use ethnic-religious links to promote Russian interests. But they may also have learnt the lessons of 1914, which would make them wary of risking conflict with other great powers in support of one of the sides in the Yugoslav conflicts. Instead, they might hope to develop a great power concert in order to avoid a split between the powers and the danger of a proxy war (a direct war being unlikely in the era of nuclear deterrence).

More radical realists might look for close relations with the FRY, perhaps even a confederation. This is also true of pan-Orthodox Slavists; during the conflicts, there were calls for the formation of a Slavonic union, incorporating Russia, Belarus, and Serbia and Montenegro. Such proposals, and appeals for support of the Serbs, also served political purposes: they were a means of attacking the government. But the political dimension had another aspect: the opposition in Russia supported Serbia because it was pursuing a policy in former Yugoslavia that they wanted Russia to pursue in the former Soviet Union. There was also a domestic political agenda common to the Serb authorities and the Russian nationalist-communist opposition.

## **Mirror Factors**

Much of the interest in events in Yugoslavia aroused in 1991 among Soviet/Russian political circles as well as in Western élites, arose from awareness of the parallel situations in the Soviet Union and the SFRY. This resulted in the explicit policy agreed between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev in 1991 to hold the SFRY together because its disintegration might precipitate a similar fate for the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> After the break-up of both federations, the similarities continued.

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<sup>28</sup> For the continuation of this myth, and an analysis of its perpetuation through Russian school text books, see Mendeloff (1999).

<sup>29</sup> USSR Ministry of Foreign Affairs (30 July 1991).

## **Diaspora**

When the administrative borders of the Soviet Union became international borders between independent states, twenty-five million ethnic Russians found themselves living outside the Russian Federation in other newly independent states. This became a cause of instability in the region. In particular, the Russian minority in Moldova created the 'Trans-Dniestr Republic', while the Crimean parliament became a forum for efforts to make Crimea a part of the Russian Federation, rather than part of Ukraine as it had been since 1954. Crimea had an ethnic Russian majority, and Transdniestria a majority of ethnic Russians and Ukrainians. The situation in the latter appeared more serious because of what was in effect the outbreak of war in 1992, confused by the presence of the Russian 14th army; the situation in Crimea had potential to become more serious because of the relatively recent transfer of Crimea to Ukraine, the issue of the Black Sea Fleet, and Crimea's proximity to the Russian Federation. With time, the issue of the rights of ethnic Russians in Estonia and Latvia also gained prominence and was deliberately linked by the Russian government to the withdrawal of Russian troops.

The break-up of the SFRY also left significant ethnic minorities outside their titular state. The most prominent were ethnic Serbs in the Krajina region of Croatia, who, like Russians in Moldova, established their own 'republic', the 'Republic of Serbian Krajina'. Ethnic Serbs were also a minority in Bosnia-Herzegovina, where the 'Serb Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina' was proclaimed. But there was also a significant ethnic Croatian minority in Herzegovina, bordering Croatia. And the formerly autonomous province of Kosovo within Serbia had a ninety per cent ethnic Albanian population, which began to demand not just autonomy, but independence.

Similarities in terms of diaspora therefore existed between Russia, Serbia, Croatia, and Albania.

## **Internal Minorities**

Each of these republics with a significant diaspora in neighbouring republics also had internal minorities. So, Serbia had the Kosovo Albanians, Croatia the Krajina Serbs. Ukrainians, Latvians, and so on, also live in the Russian Federation, but the significant minorities are those concentrated in areas that are ethnically-designated constituent republics of the Russian Federation. The Russian government therefore has its own problems to face with minorities that might wish to secede. Although Moscow now has bilateral treaties with most of the ethnic republics, the Chechen republic obviously remains a primary concern. In the long term, the influx of Chinese to the Russian Far



East may also pose significant problems, 'similar to those in the Serbia-Kosovo-Albania triangle'.<sup>30</sup>

Consequently, Russia has 'interests on both sides of the borders-versus-diaspora issue'.<sup>31</sup> This would seem to mitigate against arguments of the form: because Russia faces this problem, it should support *X* in the Yugoslav conflict because *X* faces a similar problem. For example, should Russia support Serbian efforts to aid the Serb minority in Krajina in 1992, because of the situation in Moldova, or support Croatia in its attempts to put down what might be seen as a threat to its territorial integrity, because of Chechnya?

If policy towards former Yugoslavia *is* influenced by such considerations, then it is likely to reflect the Russian leadership's priorities. Russia's most vital security interest is considered to be the maintenance of the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation; the second is the 'near abroad'.<sup>32</sup> This suggests, for instance, that Chechnya is of more concern than the issue of ethnic Russians outside the Russian Federation; in other words, the borders issue is more significant than the diaspora issue. Applied to the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, this would mean that Russian diplomats are more likely to support Croatian control of Krajina and Slavonia than to encourage independence for the Serb minority (while still expressing concern over the rights of that minority, just as they have expressed concern over the rights of Russians in the former Soviet Union). And they are more likely to have been tolerant of Serbia's actions in Kosovo than of its support of the Bosnian Serbs, because those actions were aimed at upholding the maintenance of Serbia's territorial integrity.

Russian opposition figures held different views from the Yeltsin administration on the needs of Russian domestic policy and policy in the former Soviet Union, and this was reflected in their interpretations of the Yugoslav conflicts. In other words, they viewed the conflicts through the prism of the former Soviet Union. Cultural Eurasianists and neo-imperialists supported what they saw as the efforts by the federal Yugoslav authorities, the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), and the Serbian government to preserve a South Slav state, believing that their equivalents in the Soviet Union should have acted in a similar way. Nationalist-communists after 1991 viewed the Milošević regime as a model for the kind of socialist, nationalist state that they wanted to create in the former Soviet Union. Ethnic nationalists saw the Serbian government in 1992 as

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<sup>30</sup> Arbatova (1995), p. 53.

<sup>31</sup> Gow (1997a), p. 189.

<sup>32</sup> See 'Russia's Foreign Policy Concept', appendix to Rahr and Krause (1995).

aiming to create a Greater Serbia. They wanted a Greater Russia, or at least a Russian policy of supporting ethnic Russians in the 'near abroad'. They were therefore sympathetic towards Serb aims. As we shall see, many were critical of Slobodan Milošević after 1994 for 'abandoning' the Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia, just as they criticised Yeltsin for 'abandoning' the ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics.

Russian ethnic nationalists also identified with Serb grievances relating to their status within the SFRY. For example, there were Serb complaints about the 1974 Federal Constitution, which established Vojvodina and Kosovo as autonomous provinces; these provinces were allowed to have a say in Serbian affairs, but Serbia had no say in their affairs. This constitution 'was considered to be discrimination of Serbia in Yugoslavia and became the primary target of the Serbian intelligentsia after Tito's death'.<sup>33</sup> The intelligentsia also aired other complaints of discrimination against Serbs within the SFRY, as shown by the famous 'Memorandum' of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SANU) of September 1986.<sup>34</sup> Milošević, of course, addressed these grievances, particularly with regard to Kosovo, thus embarking on a policy that led directly to the wars of Yugoslav succession.

Many Russians had similar grievances, which began to be aired with the onset of *glasnost*. There was the complaint, for example, that Russia had suffered in comparison to other republics in terms of having to subsidise their development, and also that the Russian Federation lacked institutions possessed by other republics (it had no Academy of Sciences, nor even a Communist Party, separate from the Union institutions). Arbatova suggests that they also had grievances over borders similar to the Serb grievances over the 1974 constitution, particularly over Nikita Khrushchev's transferral of Crimea from Russia to Ukraine in 1956.<sup>35</sup>

After war broke out in former Yugoslavia – first in Slovenia, then in Croatia, and then Bosnia-Herzegovina – the devastation and the isolation that it brought the Serbs served as a disincentive to the reformist Russian leadership to play an equivalent role in the former Soviet Union. Kozyrev, for example, in May 1992 urged the Supreme Soviet to adopt 'well-thought out' and 'balanced decisions' in relation to Crimea; otherwise 'we may find ourselves in a Yugoslav position'.<sup>36</sup> According to Arbatova,

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<sup>33</sup> Arbatova (1995), p. 54.

<sup>34</sup> The memorandum is included in Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (1995).

<sup>35</sup> Arbatova (1995), p. 54.

<sup>36</sup> ITAR-TASS (20 May 1992).



[i]t goes without saying that the Yugoslav experience had a strong repercussion on the foreign policy of Russia both in the near abroad and in the far abroad. The mirror effect of the Yugoslav conflict was in general positive: in bloodshed, destruction and in an atmosphere of hatred and mistrust Russia saw its own probable future and shivered with horror.<sup>37</sup>

But the politicians who urged the JNA attack on Vukovar, or oversaw 'ethnic cleansing' within Bosnia-Herzegovina, did not shiver with horror. Eduard Limonov (a 'very, very famous' Russian writer, according to the leader of the Bosnian Serbs, Radovan Karadžić) in the documentary 'Serbian Epics', did not shiver in horror when he visited Serb forces besieging Sarajevo. Instead, he praised the glorious bravery of the Serbs:

You are very courageous people: despite anything what is against you, it is a great power, it will always be. Fifteen countries are against you, and you resist... And I repeat again, we Russians should take an example from you. You are people of my blood, of my religion. I really admire ... I have found the right word now, that is 'admiration'.<sup>38</sup>

This admiration was representative of the views of the red-brown coalition in Russia. While the Russian government was determined not to re-create the Yugoslav events on an incalculable scale in the former Soviet Union,

the communist-nationalist opposition in its own approach in just the same way proceed[ed] from a direct projection of the Yugoslav situation onto the former [Soviet] Union, striving in former Yugoslavia to create a precedent for its reproduction within the former Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup>

As we shall see, these differences highlighted the deep divisions over the future of Russia, reflecting profound political, philosophical, and moral differences.

## Conclusions

Evaluation of Russia's policy towards the conflicts is based on interpretation of the conflicts themselves, as well as on opinions of what kind of power Russia should be and how it should behave on the international scene. There is a network of connections linking interpretation of events in former Yugoslavia, policy towards the conflicts, the history of relations between Russia and the Balkan states, and the implications of

<sup>37</sup> Arbatova (1994), p. 35.

<sup>38</sup> 'Serbian Epics' (1992). For more examples of Limonov's admiration, see Limonov (13 January 1992).

<sup>39</sup> Kandel' (1992).

‘mirror’ factors. Underlying and to a certain extent unifying them is, I believe, an interpretation of what kind of international system is operating in the post-Cold War world, and a prescriptive view of what system should operate and how Russia should act.

There are arguments on all sides concerning the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, which is why there have been so many disputes over it within academic circles and why policy makers from other states and international organisations have found it so difficult to agree on a programme of action in response. But, by examining the wider interpretative and moral outlook of commentators and politicians, by analysing their arguments and determining the assumptions behind them, we can gain a picture of the wider beliefs by which events are interpreted and presented. And it is perhaps at this level that they should be judged.



## Chapter 4

### The liberal internationalist phase: January – autumn 1992

I argued in Chapter 2 that official Russian foreign policy during most of 1992 fitted into a liberal institutionalist framework. This was explicitly espoused by the Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev. He believed that a democratising Russia shared interests with the West, or the ‘civilised world’, because they shared values (associated with liberal democracy). The institutionalist aspect of Russian foreign policy consisted of an emphasis on the role of international institutions and international law in dealing with aggression and with abuses of human and minority rights. This role potentially included the use of economic sanctions and military intervention, although it was to be hoped that dialogue and peaceful pressure would achieve the desired results.

Kozyrev expounded this view in an article entitled ‘Russia and Human Rights’ in early 1992:

The provision adopted in Moscow at the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Council [*sic*] on Security and Co-operation in Europe, to the effect that concern for human rights is not interference in the internal affairs of states, opens up a new phase of international interaction for the benefit of mankind and for world peace... We believe that the international community should not limit itself to moral and political condemnation of any state that violates human rights; the establishment of an international force specially trained to protect human rights deserves consideration. We proposed ... imposing economic and, perhaps, other sanctions to prevent massive and flagrant violations of human rights.<sup>1</sup>

These comments related primarily to the issue of ethnic Russians/Russian speakers in the former Soviet republics, particularly the Baltic states; but the principles could also have been applied to the Yugoslav conflicts directly.

The liberal institutionalist approach was reflected in the major policy decisions concerning the Yugoslav crisis made during most of 1992: support for the establishment of UNPROFOR and the subsequent contribution of Russian troops (February/March); support for humanitarian aid efforts; recognition of the independence of Croatia and Slovenia (February); recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina (April); voting in the UN Security Council for the imposition of sanctions against the FRY (May); suspension of

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<sup>1</sup> Kozyrev (1992b), pp. 289-291.



the FRY from the CSCE (July) and the United Nations (September); and recognition of the Republic of Macedonia (August). These actions were opposed in Russia by ethnic nationalists, neo-imperialists, and pan-Slavists as well as by neo-realists/state centrists.

## Support for UNPROFOR and the UNHCR

On 21 February 1992, Russia voted in favour of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 743 which established the UN Protection Force – UNPROFOR – in Croatia. UN peace-keeping forces were deployed in four sectors, called ‘United Nations Protected Areas’ (UNPAs): East (Eastern Slavonia), West (Western Slavonia), North (northern Krajina), South (southern Krajina, including Knin) (see map 2). In March, the CIS joint armed forces’ commander-in-chief ordered the despatch of 900 Russian peace-keepers – one airborne battalion – to serve in UNPROFOR.<sup>2</sup> The Supreme Soviet gave its consent on 6 March, and the troops left for Sector East on 8 April.<sup>3</sup>

**Map 2** United Nations Protected Areas



*Based on map on Owen (1995a)*

<sup>2</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (3 March 1992).

<sup>3</sup> They were based at Tenja, between Osijek and Vukovar; see Telen' (6 December 1992).



According to Sergei Shakhrai, State Counsellor for Legal Affairs and a close Yeltsin ally,

Russia's agreeing to co-operate with the UN will contribute to strengthening Russia's international prestige. At the same time, experience in direct participation in the UN's peace-keeping activities is also valuable from the point of view of the domestic problems of the Russian Federation.<sup>4</sup>

This was not, however, a unanimous opinion. In particular, the Russian military was sceptical about the decision. According to the MFA diplomat Vitalii Churkin, high-ranking military personnel did not want Russia to participate because they did not approve of the contacts between Russian and Western soldiers and officers that would result.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Russian military was unwilling to contribute to the UN mission while Russia was not actively involved in conflict settlement (until this time, the European Community – the EC – had taken primary responsibility for conflict management). Most importantly, the armed forces were experiencing a period of difficult transition and shortage of resources at a time when a number of conflicts had broken out in the former Soviet Union and were threatening to erupt within the Russian Federation itself. This naturally increased the General Staff's reluctance to commit troops to UNPROFOR, regardless of the experience that might be gained. In the words of the First Deputy Chief of the General Staff (later to be Chief of the General Staff), General Mikhail Kolesnikov, '[w]e have let it be known that [this battalion] will be the first and the last one of its kind. Russian men should not be sent to fight abroad when there is so much to be done now in their own country.'<sup>6</sup>

The MFA prevailed in this dispute. This was partly because at that stage it was the dominant policy making institution in relation to states outside the former Soviet Union. In fact, it was only when the Russian government saw the necessity for the Russian Federation to form its own army – after it became clear that the CIS would not be sufficiently integrated to have its own armed forces – that Yeltsin issued a decree on the formation of a Russian Defence Ministry, on 16 March 1992.<sup>7</sup> Pavel Grachev was not appointed Minister of Defence until 18 May. Hence, there was no Defence Ministry to

<sup>4</sup> *Russian Television* (6 March 1992); Shakhrai presumably included disputes in the 'near abroad' among 'domestic problems'.

<sup>5</sup> Arbatova (1996), pp. 411-2.

<sup>6</sup> Felgenhauer (1994a); again, Kolesnikov presumably meant the former Soviet Union when he referred to 'their own country'. By 1994, Russia had approximately 16,000 troops in peace-keeping missions in the 'near abroad'; MacFarlane and Schnabel (1995), p. 308.

<sup>7</sup> Sakwa (1993), p. 316.



oppose the move,<sup>8</sup> while the primary concern of the CIS Joint Command under Marshal Shaposhnikov was the former Soviet Union.

Moscow continued to express its support for UN peace-keeping by voting for resolutions extending UNPROFOR's mandate into Bosnia-Herzegovina,<sup>9</sup> where its main role was to guarantee the safe provision of humanitarian supplies. In addition, Russia supported UNSCR 795 in December which established an UNPROFOR presence in Macedonia.

At times, Kozyrev even suggested that UN forces might be justified in going beyond peace-keeping to peace enforcement. For example, during the Supreme Soviet debate of 26 June 1992, he suggested that Russian forces might take part in a peace establishment mission in order, perhaps, to open Sarajevo airport, ensure the delivery of humanitarian aid supplies, and protect national minorities. Such a mission must be under a UN aegis: 'It must not be a NATO operation, which we categorically reject. Any one-sided actions by whatever country, and any military intervention, are fully excluded.'<sup>10</sup>

Kozyrev's comments did not get a positive reception in Russia. Even an intervention under United Nations aegis was treated with scepticism because of the potential implications: there was opposition across the Russian political spectrum to a precedent being set by a large scale, multi-lateral, UN-sponsored military intervention in former Yugoslavia, which might then be applied to civil wars in parts of the former Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> In addition, it was generally suspected that any intervention would be NATO-led or dominated by NATO, particularly as NATO began to take the primary role in organising UNPROFOR.<sup>12</sup>

At this stage, the future role of NATO was uncertain after it had achieved its primary purpose with the collapse of the Warsaw Pact. But two possible re-definitions of its role began to emerge: to expand into Eastern Europe, and to adopt a peace-keeping and peace enforcing role particularly in response to the proliferating ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and in the former Soviet Union. At a session of the NATO council in Oslo in June 1992, the head of the American delegation, Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, urged NATO to 'take on a new role'; it should act in Yugoslavia to 'alleviate the suffering there', and 'should also play a role in efforts to establish the peace in Nagorno-Karabakh'. According to one West European diplomat,

<sup>8</sup> Baev (1996a), p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> In 1992, UNSCRs 758, 761, 764, and 776.

<sup>10</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992a). See also *Maiak Radio* (28 May 1992).

<sup>11</sup> Lough (1993a).

<sup>12</sup> Gow (1997a), pp. 112-13.



NATO was 'not yet ready for large-scale operations, for efforts to impose peace by force, but the first step toward a decisive broadening of NATO's zone of responsibility has been taken today'.<sup>13</sup>

## **Recognition of the Yugoslav successor republics**

### **Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina**

Russia recognised the independence of Croatia and Slovenia on 17 February 1992, just over a month after the European Community countries, and Bosnia-Herzegovina on 28 April 1992, three weeks after the EC and the United States. Kozyrev believed that those republics had a right to independence and sovereignty, and that recognition might help protect them from aggressive actions which challenged that right. His interpretation of events in Yugoslavia was clearly shaped by what had happened in the Soviet Union the previous year. The government of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR) had itself sought 'self-determination' – sovereignty and independence – from the Soviet Union. Consequently, at the start of 1992 the Russian government was sympathetic to the aims of the republics of the SFRY that shared this goal. And it respected the decision of the EC since the West was perceived as the representative of 'civilised' international society; this meant, for example, that Russian diplomats did not at this stage suspect Western states such as Germany of seeking to extend great power influence in the region and of supporting traditional allies or co-religionists. As Kozyrev put it, speaking of the opposition demand to take into account the 'Slavonic factor', 'today not one state is governed by such criteria in its foreign policy, if, of course, we are talking about civilised democratic countries'.<sup>14</sup>

The desire to 'follow the West', the intention to apply international law, and the willingness to allow the republics of Yugoslavia the independence that Russia now enjoyed, were inter-related aspects of the overall outlook of the new Russian government. This was expressed clearly by the commentator Andrei Ostal'skii in *Izvestiia*:

Russia's decision not to lag behind Western Europe any more and to recognise the independence of Slovenia and Croatia can hardly be seen as unexpected. We were prompted to take the step by a desire to respect the principles of international law, the values of contemporary civilisation and the very logic of events. After all, the two former republics have already gained *de facto* independence, and that

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<sup>13</sup> Ostal'skii (5 June 1992).

<sup>14</sup> Kozyrev (20 August 1992).



independence is recognised *de jure* by virtually all of Europe. And perhaps most importantly, we know well from our own experience what attempts to ignore reality and to deny peoples their right to self-determination can lead to.<sup>15</sup>

The special envoy of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Iurii Deriabin, also emphasised the pragmatic logic of the decision. He called the necessity to recognise 'unfortunate', but the 'reality' of the failure of the policy aimed at holding Yugoslavia together. The priority of Russian diplomacy was to maintain co-operation with the EC and with the Yugoslav successor states. Delaying recognition would jeopardise this: 'We have already lagged behind on more than one occasion, and it hasn't been to our advantage.' Instead, it was necessary to 'take political realities into account', and recognition increased the chances of Russia facilitating a satisfactory solution to the issue of the Serb minority in Croatia, and of promoting a comprehensive political resolution of the Yugoslav crisis.<sup>16</sup>

Kozyrev presented the decision to recognise these republics as the application of international law. He claimed in August 1992 that recognition of all the former Yugoslav republics that had declared their independence was governed by the *political* necessity of buttressing the *legal* right of those states to sovereignty and independence. Referring to Macedonia, he wrote that it

has remained already for several months unrecognised and hence can become easy booty in the region, where very aggressive forces are operating even against those countries which possess a solid international-legal status. This was precisely the point of the international recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina and, before that, of Croatia and Slovenia; it was (and is now with Bosnia and Herzegovina) being attempted by force to deprive them of their rights to independence and sovereignty.<sup>17</sup>

The problem with this argument is that international law did not conclusively grant the former Yugoslav republics the right to independence. Firstly, while the SFRY continued to exist as a sovereign state, the Yugoslav constitution was the legal regulator of relations between the republics. Unlike the constitution of the USSR, however, the Yugoslav constitution did not unambiguously grant constituent republics the right to secession.<sup>18</sup> Secondly, if the SFRY was breaking up, it was not clear what the

<sup>15</sup> Ostal'skii (6 February 1992).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*; Edemskii (1996), p. 33; and MFA representative quoted in Volobuev and Tiagunenkov (28 February 1992).

<sup>17</sup> Kozyrev (20 August 1992).

<sup>18</sup> *Constitution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia* (1974).



appropriate precedent in international law was. One commentator suggests that the Yugoslav case is an instance of the collapse of a multi-national state, of which the only previous examples were the dissolution of the Habsburg and Ottoman empires; in those cases, the frontiers of the successor states 'were established by considerations of ethnicity, language, historic settlement, regional security, and economic viability, and were adjudicated through the mechanism of international conferences'. The internal boundaries 'did not retain upon dissolution any special sanctity' and plebiscites were one useful means of determining the preferences of the populations concerned.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, the Arbitration Commission set up by the EC under Robert Badinter applied the principle of *uti possidetis* ('have what you have had'), which was originally established in the context of de-colonisation and meant that, in the absence of a peaceful agreement to alter frontiers, the colonial administrative boundaries became the borders of the new states. This was in line with the general trend of international law, since the right to national self-determination has been interpreted on a territorial rather than an ethnic basis in post-war international legal practice. As such, it was a coherent argument of practical merit, since the consequence of departing from the civic interpretation of self-determination would be a plethora of demands for the re-drawing of borders across Europe, in particular in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, with the inevitable consequence of major 'population transfers'.

Unfortunately, in Yugoslavia itself, self-determination tended to be understood ethnically, rather than territorially, by the various leaderships and the population as a whole. For example, the preamble to the Croatian constitution adopted at the end of 1990 laid insistent emphasis on 'the historical right of the Croatian people to full state sovereignty', based on 'the thousand-year-long national identity and state existence of the Croatian nation' (defined ethnically).<sup>20</sup> The Serbian leadership argued that the Serbs living in Croatia, as part of the Serb 'nation', had as much right to self-determination as the Slovenes and the Croats, and the Serbian delegation to the Conference for Peace in Yugoslavia asked the Arbitration Commission to clarify this point. The answer was that they enjoyed a second-order right to self-determination (they could, for instance, demand autonomy) but this did not mean a right to secession. Their first-order right to self-determination was as part of the *civic* nation, that is the population of Croatia, and meant a right to democracy.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Rady (1996).

<sup>20</sup> *Constitution of the Republic of Croatia* (22 December 1990).

<sup>21</sup> Weller (1992), p. 591.



While the Badinter Commission upheld Croatian territorial self-determination, it was in fact careful to demand more guarantees of the rights of the members of the population who were not ethnic Croats. On 11 January 1992, it declared that the Republic of Croatia now met the necessary conditions for its recognition (in accordance with the Declaration on Yugoslavia and the Guidelines on the Recognition of New States in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union, adopted by the Council of the European Communities on 16 December 1991), but subject to the reservation that the Republic supplement the Constitutional Act in such a way as to satisfy conditions relating to rights of minorities.<sup>22</sup> Without waiting for those conditions to be met, the German government announced the following day that it intended to recognise Croatia unconditionally. Rather than insist that the Croatian government meet the Badinter conditions before gaining recognition, the other EC countries soon followed Germany. A similar process occurred when the EC states recognised the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina in April. Yet, one republic – Macedonia – remained unrecognised even though it had satisfied the Badinter commission's conditions, because of the objections of Greece (see below).

The impression was thus created that the EC was not abiding by its own guidelines for recognition. Elena Gus'kova states the problem concisely:

After the adoption of the EC Declaration, Croatia was hastily recognised, although it violated at least four of the five EC conditions, but recognition of Macedonia was put off, although it violated none. Meanwhile, the independence of war-torn Bosnia and Herzegovina was supported, a territory with an unstable internal situation, with an undefined political structure, and with relations between the peoples [*narodami*] living there unclear.<sup>23</sup>

Realist critics believed that Western states – in particular, Germany and the United States – were using the recognition issue to re-establish their influence in the Balkans. For example, Aleksandr Chudakov wrote in the nationalist *Sovetskaia Rossiia*:

More than once, in sitting down to a game of European political solitaire, Germany has begun with the Yugoslav card. And not surprisingly: whoever controls Yugoslavia (or dominates it) automatically becomes the master of all south-eastern Europe... Today it is much cheaper and much easier to rule by dividing rather than by conquering. The openly pro-German orientation of Slovenia and Croatia, plus

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<sup>22</sup> 'Opinion No. 5 on the Recognition of the Republic of Croatia by the European Community and its Member States, Paris, 11 January 1992', in Trifunovska (1994), pp. 489–490.

<sup>23</sup> Gus'kova (1998a), p. 14.



the influence of 'His Majesty the Bundesmark', have played a decisive role. Is it any wonder that Germany has become the staunchest supporter of unconditional recognition of the new Balkan republics?<sup>24</sup>

Such realist approaches often yield highly imaginative conspiracy theories that have no relation to actual facts, or at least have no evidence to support them; the authors are either slightly self-congratulatory in their discovery of the 'truth', or simply assume that all policy makers share their reductive realism. One fine example appeared in *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, after the United States recognised the independence of Bosnia-Herzegovina:

The strengthening of Germany's position, and Europe's desire for a single set of borders that leaves little room for the US, could not help but cause concern. From an objective standpoint, the Americans had lost Croatia [to Germany]. However, even then the US had its sights on another republic, one much more important in terms of industrial potential and with the same strategic access to the Mediterranean Sea – and, most importantly, the only republic in Europe that professes Islam. And when the war broke out in Bosnia-Herzegovina, it wasn't Germany but the US that took a leading role... Following Germany's example, the US has decided to use Serbia as a ploy to win over Bosnia-Herzegovina and, at the same time, to gain supporters and enhance its prestige in other Muslim countries – prestige that has noticeably slipped of late.<sup>25</sup>

Many Russian commentators were critical of their own government for recognising Croatia, Slovenia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina so 'hastily'. For example, Nadia Arbatova wrote that

the Western position on recognition of the former Yugoslav republics was never criticised or even analysed on an official level in Russia. This may be explained by two facts. First, after years of confrontation, unity with the West came to be the major priority for Moscow. It did not want to cast a cloud over its new relations by introducing any objections or disagreements. Second, it wanted to persuade the West that Russia was a more reliable partner than the USSR. Foreign Minister Kozyrev missed no opportunity to underline the point.<sup>26</sup>

The political, theoretical, and moral differences between the liberal Westernisers and their realist and ethnic nationalist critics were sharply revealed in many of the

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<sup>24</sup> Chudakov (21 March 1992).

<sup>25</sup> Gorlov (28 April 1992). For a more lengthy exposition of this theory, see Gus'kova (1998b).

<sup>26</sup> Arbatova (1996), p. 411.



reactions to recognition. If Kozyrev's policy entwined support for the West, for international law, and for 'civilised divorce' in the former Soviet Union, many of his opponents displayed continued antagonism towards the West, advocated the pursuit of Russian interests in relation to the Yugoslav conflicts, and favoured the re-establishment of the Soviet Union, or at least the incorporation of those areas outside Russia with a large ethnic Russian or Russian-speaking population. We can see a 'negative' of the official Russian approach as described above by Ostal'skii, in an article in *Pravda* by Pavel Volobuev and Liudmila Tiagunenکو of the Institute of International Economic and Political Research (RAN):

We cannot fail to give due credit to the Serbian leadership. For it, the fate of its own people, no matter where they live, is by no means a secondary question. It seems that the vague references to realities [in Deriabin's statement] conceals something else – a reluctance to 'offend' the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] (a zealous champion of Croatian and Slovenian independence)...

There is concern that our Foreign Ministry's excessive haste in recognising the former republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia could turn against the Russian Federation itself. After all, it has inherited certain geo-political interests and historical traditions. Also well-known is the rich concept of long-term interests, which differ significantly from short-term interests and expediency. Nor have such foreign policy categories as spheres of interests and long-term traditions of alliance disappeared (whether certain of our highly-moral commentators like it or not).<sup>27</sup>

Chudakov went further: recognition was the 'price' of aid from the EC:

The unintelligible muttering of present-day Nesselrodes about the need 'not to lag behind contemporary processes and new political realities in Europe' is poor justification for betraying Serbia. How can one talk about geo-politics when Russia is pinning all its hopes on 'humanitarian' rations from the Bundeswehr! Only a naïve person could have thought that we wouldn't have to pay for the German sausages. Needless to say, the first bills have now been paid...<sup>28</sup>

Shed of the vituperative rhetoric, there was an element of truth in these allegations. It was not so much that Russian diplomats consciously sought a trade-off between support of Western policy on the Yugoslav conflicts and aid to Russia, at least in the case of recognition (I shall discuss the accusations in relation to sanctions below).

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<sup>27</sup> Volobuev and Tiagunenکو (28 February 1992).

<sup>28</sup> Chudakov (21 March 1992).



Rather, they somewhat unquestioningly accepted the EC and US approach to the issue because they believed that the West was the guardian of international law and of 'civilised' international society.

No convincing evidence has been uncovered to prove that Germany or the United States were attempting to establish a sphere of influence in the Balkans, or that they were supporting traditional allies and creating future allies. In fact, there were strong political arguments for recognition of Croatia after war had broken out, particularly after the shelling of Vukovar and Dubrovnik, and recognition did seem to contribute to creating a cease-fire in Krajina.<sup>29</sup> And although the decision to recognise Bosnia has been widely criticised for pushing the country into war, fighting there also *preceded* the act of recognition (by April there were widespread incidents of conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina), and recognition allowed the problem to be internationalised.

But Western policy in the recognition process *was* inconsistent and haphazard and thus paved the way for accusations of power politics. The inconsistency was initially neglected by Russian policy makers in their naïve belief in the West, but it ultimately contributed to undermining their institutionalist belief in the possibility of impartial application of international law. Furthermore, while Russian policy was shaped in part by the approach Russian policy makers had themselves adopted during the break-up of the Soviet Union, they failed to recognise both the extent to which, for example, the Croatian authorities did not share their own civic nationalist approach, and the legal differences between the status of the USSR and the SFRY.

The issue of Macedonia, however, offered the Russian administration the opportunity to respond to its domestic critics.

## Recognition of Macedonia

Russia became only the sixth state to recognise the Republic of Macedonia, on 6 August 1992. The decision was announced by Boris Yeltsin after meeting the Bulgarian President, Zhelyu Zhelev, in Sofia. Many Russian observers regarded this as an example of Yeltsin's tendency to take dramatic and apparently impulsive foreign policy initiatives during official visits.<sup>30</sup> As early as May 1992, however, when Kozyrev visited Skopje, it had been thought that Russia was about to recognise Macedonia.<sup>31</sup> But the MFA decided not to do so at this stage, because it was wary of damaging relations

<sup>29</sup> Gow (1992), p. 200. For a defence of the German decision, see Libal (1997).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Nekrasov (16 August 1992); and Crow (13 November 1992), p. 37.

<sup>31</sup> *Izvestiia* (30 May 1992).



with Greece which remained, according to Kozyrev, a 'friendly country',<sup>32</sup> and whose government had warned Moscow that recognition of Macedonia before the EC had taken a final decision would be regarded as an 'unfriendly act'.<sup>33</sup> Moscow agreed to postpone recognition at least until the European Community had decided where it stood on the matter.<sup>34</sup>

The decision in May to delay recognition further, despite the expectations aroused, did little to counter the growing impression in Russia that the MFA was failing to take an independent line on the Yugoslav crisis, and was merely demurring to Western decision makers (or, in the case of Macedonia, non-decision makers). After all, this was one issue on which Russia could justifiably act without accusations in the West of adopting a pro-Serb stance. It offered an opportunity to assert Russia's great power interests in contributing to a resolution of events in the Balkans within the context of the liberal internationalist approach espoused by Kozyrev. In other words, it would show that Russia itself could be an agent of international law, able to act independently where necessary to correct contradictions, errors, or bias in the Western approach.

In fact, the major Western powers might have welcomed the decision.<sup>35</sup> For, once again, the policy of the EC was being dictated by one state; in the case of the early recognition of Croatia, this had been Germany; in the case of tardy recognition of Macedonia, it was Greece. The attempt to use the Yugoslav crisis to establish the EC as the significant institution in Europe for solving such disputes, and as an impartial upholder of international law, was failing disastrously; instead, the EC gave the impression of being an organisation in which the principle of unanimity enabled any one state to hold the others to ransom and thus pursue its own interests.

After the Macedonian parliament had adopted two constitutional amendments stating explicitly that the Republic did not have territorial pretensions towards neighbouring states, that the borders could be changed only through peaceful agreement and in correspondence with international norms, and that the Republic would not violate the sovereign rights of other states or intervene in their internal affairs,<sup>36</sup> the Badinter Commission declared on 11 January 1992 that the Republic of Macedonia satisfied all its guideline conditions concerning recognition of new states, and also those in the Declaration on Yugoslavia adopted at the EC Foreign Ministers' meeting in December

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<sup>32</sup> Iusin (28 May 1992).

<sup>33</sup> Tsekhmistrenko (1996), p. 80.

<sup>34</sup> Iusin (5 August 1992).

<sup>35</sup> Iusin (28 May 1992).

<sup>36</sup> Amendment of 6 January 1992, *Konstitutsiia Respubliki Makedonii* (17 November 1991), pp. 144-145.



1991.<sup>37</sup> Yet Greece continued to block EC recognition, and also carried out a trade blockade of Macedonia to which the EC 'closed their eyes'.<sup>38</sup> Such categorical statements on the part of Macedonia were considered insufficient in Greece while the Republic retained that name as well as the use of national symbols which the Greeks claimed as their own.<sup>39</sup>

The acquiescence of other EC governments to the Greek position, allowing recognition to be delayed despite agreeing with it in principle, was explained in the Russian press as being not just a result of the requirement of unanimity, but also because Macedonia, unlike Croatia and Slovenia, lacked powerful patrons.<sup>40</sup> The implication was, firstly, that the EC's policy on recognition of former Yugoslav republics was dictated by politics, not neutral international law, and, secondly, that Russia could act as the patron of Macedonia. But Russia appeared to accept the decision of the Lisbon conference of EC Foreign Ministers in June at which it was declared that the EC states were ready to recognise the republic under a name not including the word 'Macedonia'. A Foreign Ministry briefing stated that Russia preferred a synchronous European decision.<sup>41</sup>

It was for this reason that Yeltsin's announcement at the start of August created such a sensation. Yeltsin appears to have been convinced of the need to recognise by the arguments of Bulgarian President Zhelyu Zhelev during his visit (Bulgaria was the first country to recognise Macedonia, on 16 January 1992, and consistently advocated support of the republic).<sup>42</sup>

The following day, Yeltsin signed the decree officially recognising Macedonia and stating that the Russian Foreign Ministry would conduct negotiations regarding the establishment of diplomatic relations.<sup>43</sup> In announcing this, Vitalii Churkin, representing the MFA, underlined that 'we are convinced that our political act promotes peace and stability in the Balkans'.<sup>44</sup> Responding to criticism from Western European states that Russia should have concurred with the position adopted by the EC at the Lisbon conference, Churkin revealed an assertiveness that was to become more prevalent, saying that, since Russia had not been consulted on the document issued after the

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<sup>37</sup> Printed (in Russian) in Gus'kova (1997), pp. 393-399.

<sup>38</sup> Nekrasov (16 August 1992).

<sup>39</sup> Ackerman (1996), p. 413.

<sup>40</sup> Iusin (28 May 1992).

<sup>41</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (30 June 1992).

<sup>42</sup> Russian Federation President (3 August 1992).

<sup>43</sup> Russian Federation President (4 August 1992).

<sup>44</sup> Russian Federation MFA (5 August 1992).



Lisbon meeting, the Russian Federation had 'no commitment to anyone'.<sup>45</sup> And Kozyrev himself used Yeltsin's Macedonian initiative to argue that 'in those cases, when it is a question of justice, Russia can, ought, and will act solo in the Balkans'.<sup>46</sup>

As expected, Greek reaction was extremely hostile, and Yeltsin's blunt final statement that 'Macedonia itself ought to decide what it is called' did little to soothe feelings.<sup>47</sup> The Greek government considered the Russian initiative to be a 'blatantly unfriendly act' that might have negative consequences for Greek-Russian relations, as well as 'a great political mistake that threatens to undermine efforts for peace and stability in the region'.<sup>48</sup>

Nevertheless, tensions were reduced by a lengthy telephone conversation between acting Russian prime minister, Egor Gaidar, and the Prime Minister of Greece, Konstantinos Mitsotakis. Thus, the Greek threat to veto EC aid to Russia did not materialise. As one commentator put it,

the threat of a Greek veto in the EC of the granting of aid to Russia looks unconvincing; the development of West-East relations is too high a stake to be sacrificed for the sake of Alexander the Great's helmet.<sup>49</sup>

But the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Macedonia was delayed for a sufficiently long period to confirm that the MFA was wary of offending Greece further. An announcement of the intention to negotiate with Macedonia the exchange of ambassadors was not made until 18 August 1993,<sup>50</sup> and diplomatic relations were finally established on 31 January 1994. Russia was the thirtieth country to do so, a month later than France.<sup>51</sup> This compares with a gap of only three months between Russian recognition of Croatia and the establishment of diplomatic relations on 25 May 1992.

Limiting the impact on relations with Greece proved not too difficult, because relations had hitherto been very positive, and remained so on other issues; Greece had no great incentive to curtail this relationship, particularly since the support of a permanent Security Council member on issues such as Cyprus (and, potentially, disputes with Turkey) remained a significant calculation.<sup>52</sup> The position of the two

<sup>45</sup> Crow (13 November 1992), p. 37.

<sup>46</sup> Kozyrev (20 August 1992).

<sup>47</sup> Russian Federation President (3 August 1992).

<sup>48</sup> Tsekhmistrenko (1996), p. 80; Crow (13 November 1992), p. 38.

<sup>49</sup> Shchipanov (11 August 1992).

<sup>50</sup> Russian Federation MFA (18 August 1993).

<sup>51</sup> 'Spisok gosudarstv ustanovivshikh diplomaticheskie otnosheniia s Respublikoi Makedoniei', in Gus'kova (1997), pp. 402-404.

<sup>52</sup> Iusin (5 August 1992).



countries towards the Bosnian crisis, in particular opposing military intervention against the Bosnian Serbs, was also a contributing factor.<sup>53</sup>

Much of the Russian press responded positively to Yeltsin's initiative, welcoming his incisive casting aside of recommendations from 'super-cautious Foreign Ministry officials'.<sup>54</sup> Commentators saw it as a sign that Yeltsin was beginning to respond to domestic criticism of the MFA's foreign policy. For instance, Igor' Nekrasov wrote in *Moskovskie novosti*:

It turns out that in the circumstances which have developed, only Russia could cut the 'Macedonian knot', and Boris Yeltsin was suited for this task like nobody else... Will this step of Boris Yeltsin not turn out to be the beginning of the rebirth of the image of Russia as a great power, able to stand up for its own priorities, not adapting too much to the opinions of others?<sup>55</sup>

### **Status of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**

By the end of December 1991, the republics of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia had all declared their independence and applied to the EC for recognition; as we have seen, recognition was accorded to all except Macedonia by the end of April 1992. Serbia and Montenegro had not applied for recognition, on the grounds that they had been recognised at the Berlin Congress of 1878 and had maintained full international legal continuity since then.<sup>56</sup> However, with Western states threatening to expel it from international organisation such as the UN and the CSCE, the leadership of rump Yugoslavia decided that its status needed to be assured.

Consequently, on 27 April 1992, a joint session of the rump Parliamentary Assembly of the former SFRY and the National Assemblies of Serbia and Montenegro proclaimed the 'Federal Republic of Yugoslavia', 'continuing the State, international legal and political personality of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia'.<sup>57</sup> This meant that it was claiming to succeed the rights and obligations of the SFRY, in the same way that Russia had succeeded those of the Soviet Union. Its claim was defended on the basis that the population and territory of the present state constituted a large portion of the previous state, and that the nucleus of the SFRY was formed by Serbia and Montenegro.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Abarinov (12 January 1993).

<sup>54</sup> Iusin (5 August 1992).

<sup>55</sup> Nekrasov (16 August 1992).

<sup>56</sup> Marković (1996), p. 30.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Weller (1992), p. 595.

<sup>58</sup> Statement of Serbian Foreign Minister Vladislav Jovanović, 9 March 1992, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 595.



For the Serbian and Montenegrin authorities, continuity status meant that it would not need to re-apply for membership of the UN, CSCE, and other international bodies. This was important because acceptance might be delayed as a result of international disapproval of Serb actions in Bosnia and Croatia, and any delay would also prevent the FRY from vetoing CSCE decisions (the CSCE had until then operated on the principle of consensus). They also hoped that if continuity status was confirmed, then they could follow the Soviet example whereby the Russian Federation took over all assets and liabilities of the Soviet Union and, significantly for the FRY authorities, took responsibility for the Soviet Army stationed outside the Russian Federation. However, the agreement of the other republics was necessary for this to happen.<sup>59</sup> In the Soviet Union, the decision on assets and liabilities was an agreement of political convenience between Russia and the other successor states (initially with the exception of Ukraine).<sup>60</sup> The former Soviet republics also believed that the agreement on the army would promote stability by clarifying control of Soviet armed forces remaining in those republics.<sup>61</sup> Such consent was, not surprisingly, lacking in former Yugoslavia.

The issue was first raised at the CSCE meeting in April 1992. The United States wanted the FRY/Serbia at least to be suspended regardless of the issue of legal succession, 'until its behaviour conforms to established norms', while Russia called for a 'balanced approach' including all parties to the conflict.<sup>62</sup> Russian diplomats believed that it was preferable to have FRY representation at the CSCE during this critical time.<sup>63</sup> Although this may be interpreted as protecting Serb interests, we have already seen that they held the same opinion with regards to Macedonia. Other delegations, such as Romania, also shared the Russian view.<sup>64</sup>

Rather than support the FRY's automatic legal succession to the SFRY, Russian diplomats recommended that it re-apply for membership of the CSCE, implying that they would support its immediate acceptance without acknowledging legal succession. This allowed a compromise solution to be reached. After heated debates, fifty-one out of fifty-two states of the CSCE adopted a resolution which excluded Yugoslav representatives from discussions on the crisis in former Yugoslavia, but delayed until the July meeting a decision on full suspension.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 596. The point was also made by Kozyrev himself, *Maiak Radio* (17 September 1992).

<sup>60</sup> Müllerson (1994) p. 144.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>62</sup> Vostrukhov and Rodionov (7 May 1992).

<sup>63</sup> Rodionov (30 April 1992).

<sup>64</sup> Weller (1992), p. 599.

<sup>65</sup> Crow (24 July 1992), p. 33. The FRY opposed the resolution, but the decision marked the introduction of a 'consensus-minus-one' rule at the CSCE, allowing the majority to over-rule its objections.



Russia was accused by many delegations of blocking a more radical resolution; Austria, for example, claimed that Russia 'was on the same bench as the Yugoslav aggressors'. But the Russian delegate, Iu. Gusarov, denied this:

We explained to our partners that our position was not dictated by a pro-Serbian orientation or a desire to shield Belgrade. We believe that expelling from the CSCE process one of the parties to the conflict is hardly in the interests of settling the crisis in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, the apparent continuation of FRY involvement in the Bosnian conflict led Russia to accept at the CSCE summit from 9-10 July that Yugoslavia should be suspended from the CSCE until 14 October 1992 (the decision was then re-affirmed).<sup>67</sup>

A similar process occurred in relation to the FRY's membership of the UN. Russian policy was now directed at supporting the federal Yugoslav authorities under President Dobrica Ćosić and Prime Minister Milan Panić, which were more moderate than the republican leadership under Serbian President Slobodan Milošević. When Kozyrev met Panić on 10 July, the latter informed him that he intended to achieve a radical turnaround in the course of the Yugoslav government towards democracy, an end to bloodshed, and a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Kozyrev stated that Russia would back this course, and would therefore support Yugoslavia in maintaining its place in the UN and the CSCE.<sup>68</sup> Aiming to prevent the expulsion of the FRY from the UN, Russia adopted a policy similar to that regarding CSCE membership: it urged the FRY leadership not to insist on continuity status, but to submit a new application for membership, which Russia would support.<sup>69</sup> When Panić accepted this proposal, Kozyrev declared: 'we want the new Yugoslavia – the Yugoslavia of Panić – to receive international recognition and to occupy its proper place in the family of civilised free peoples.'<sup>70</sup>

There were obstacles to a compromise on UN membership both from the Serbian side and from certain Western states. The Serbian government announced that Panić's statement on application for membership in the UN 'is legally neither a decision nor binding for the FRY' and added that with such an application 'we would participate in the destruction of our own state... Renunciation of international continuity would bring the FRY into a state of institutional isolation.'<sup>71</sup> On the other side, the United States and

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<sup>66</sup> Zubko (13 May 1992).

<sup>67</sup> Crow (24 July 1992), p. 33.

<sup>68</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (10 July 1992).

<sup>69</sup> Iusin (17 September 1992).

<sup>70</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (16 September 1992).

<sup>71</sup> Marković (1996), p. 60.



the United Kingdom seemed determined to create just such institutional isolation by expelling the FRY from the UN, but Russia was expected to veto any such proposal in the Security Council.<sup>72</sup> It was perhaps this implicit threat that led the Security Council to adopt Resolution 777, which adopted the compromise solution that Kozyrev had been seeking.

Panić was satisfied that the resolution made it possible to avoid the humiliation of expulsion; although the FRY would in the meantime take no part in the General Assembly, Belgrade would still be able to participate in the work of other UN bodies, the mission of the FRY would continue to function, and the 'Yugoslav' plaque would remain in the General Assembly's meeting hall.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the opposition Russian media were not satisfied; *Pravda* reported that by ratifying UNSCR 777, the General Assembly had expelled the FRY from the UN – the first time that any state had been expelled in the United Nations' forty-seven year history. The Russian delegation was criticised for not vetoing the resolution.<sup>74</sup> Oleg Rumiantsev, Executive Secretary of the Constitutional Commission, accused Kozyrev of betraying Russia's interests and once again demonstrating that Russian foreign policy had no independence.<sup>75</sup> In response to such criticism, the MFA issued a statement accusing the media of creating 'a distorted picture of the UN Security Council's decisions on Yugoslavia', and explaining that Yugoslavia had not been expelled.<sup>76</sup>

## Sanctions imposed on the FRY

It was the Russian vote in the Security Council in favour of imposing economic sanctions against the FRY on 30 May 1992 that sparked the wide-ranging debate in Russia concerning Russia's Balkans policy. Opposition was expressed in the press, by academics, and by deputies in the Supreme Soviet who put official policy under heavy scrutiny, including calling Kozyrev to a joint session on 26 June. Thus, the vote for sanctions revealed deep divisions within the political élite in relation to what kind of policy Russia should pursue towards the Yugoslav conflicts. These divisions reflected differing approaches to the question of what kind of state the post-Soviet Russian Federation should be, and what should be the basis of its relations with the outside world. These differences reflected the distinct approaches that I outlined in chapter 3.

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<sup>72</sup> Iusin (17 September 1992).

<sup>73</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (22 September 1992); and Iusin (21 September 1992).

<sup>74</sup> Drobkov (24 September 1992).

<sup>75</sup> Shinkin (24 September 1992).

<sup>76</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (26 September 1992).



## The Foreign Ministry view

Russian diplomats initially resisted the imposition of sanctions against any side in the conflict in Bosnia, just as they initially resisted the suspension/expulsion of the FRY from the CSCE and the UN. They hoped that a political agreement could be reached that would preclude the need for coercive measures. To this end, Kozyrev himself embarked on a peace-promoting mission to the various capitals of former Yugoslavia. He argued that Russia had advantages over Western states and institutions in making a breakthrough, on account of its Slavonic and historic links with the region. Secondly, Russia was in a unique position to understand post-communist problems. And because Russia gave advice rather than issued threats or offered crude rewards – in Kozyrev's words, 'economic confetti or truncheons' – it was more likely to be successful.<sup>77</sup>

Unfortunately, this optimism did not match reality; Kozyrev was no more successful than the many other negotiators seeking peace in Bosnia. He hoped that he had persuaded the acting chairman of the Yugoslav collective presidency, Branko Kostić, as well as Milošević, to agree in principle to a cease-fire and the lifting of the blockade around Sarajevo airport to enable relief goods to be delivered. But the cease-fire lasted only a few hours, and Serbia still appeared to be supporting the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>78</sup> It was this failure that led to the vote for sanctions. Kozyrev was also influenced by the personal impact of witnessing at first hand the horrors of the war.<sup>79</sup>

We have seen already that Kozyrev did not object to sanctions in principle; indeed, he believed that they might be an essential political tool in deterring abuses of human rights. And he explicitly stated that this position had now been reached with regard to Yugoslavia:

I think that we have a full moral right and duty to say now that if you do not want to act in good faith, as we have advised in a friendly fashion, then let us use a different language... I believe at least that our means of persuasion have now reached such a stage that we need to back them up with fairly harsh political actions.<sup>80</sup>

According to Kozyrev, the FRY was 'not one hundred per cent responsible' for the bloodshed, but it bore the greatest responsibility as the 'leading power ... the power which has a great influence on the way the situation is developing'.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> *Maiak Radio* (28 May 1992).

<sup>78</sup> Crow (24 July 1992), pp. 31-32.

<sup>79</sup> *Maiak Radio* (28 May 1992).

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*



Since Bosnia-Herzegovina was now considered an independent state, outside military interference in its affairs was deemed a breach of international law, especially given the crimes being committed. The Security Council therefore passed Resolution 752 on 15 May 1992 demanding that 'all forms of interference from outside Bosnia-Herzegovina ... cease immediately' and that

those units of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) and elements of the Croatian Army now in Bosnia-Herzegovina must either be withdrawn, or be subject to the authority of the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, or be disbanded and disarmed with their weapons placed under effective international monitoring.<sup>82</sup>

As fighting continued, these demands had obviously not been met. The Security Council consequently passed Resolution 757 on 30 May which, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, condemned 'the failure of the authorities in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), including the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA), to take effective measures to fulfil the requirements of resolution 752 (1992)' and imposed mandatory sanctions on that country.

The Russian government issued a declaration the same day justifying in strong terms its decision to vote for sanctions, and again hinting at the possibility of peace-making action:

Belgrade has not listened to our good advice and warnings, has not carried out the demands of the international community and has thus inflicted upon itself sanctions from the United Nations.

Voting for these sanctions, Russia is carrying out its responsibility as a great power to uphold international order. At the same time we believe that the Security Council ought to go further and take responsibility for regulation in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the Yugoslav crisis as a whole using all measures envisaged in the UN Charter to restore peace.<sup>83</sup>

The imposition of sanctions against the FRY appeared to have an immediate effect on the Yugoslav government, which called for an end to all hostile actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This appeal was received favourably in Moscow, where the Foreign Ministry stated that if the situation did begin to improve in Bosnia – if the fighting stopped and humanitarian supplies were able to reach their intended recipients – then Russia would raise the issue of lifting sanctions.<sup>84</sup> However, in the same statement, the

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<sup>82</sup> All quotes from UNSCRs are taken from the resolutions as posted on the UN web-site at <http://www.un.org/documents/scres.htm>.

<sup>83</sup> Russian Federation MFA (3 June 1992).

<sup>84</sup> Russian Federation MFA (5 June 1992).



MFA – in response to the outcry that the vote had caused in Russia – elaborated the reasons why it had supported sanctions: the ministry was devoted to traditionally friendly relations with all the republics of former Yugoslavia without exception, it explained, and would take into account the historical links with their traditional and historical components, but

the ethnic principle, about which certain parts of the anti-reformist press speak so emotionally, cannot be a basic criterion in the formulation of a serious and responsible policy. Blind orientation towards this principle could lead the situation in the Balkans to a global explosion, a third world war.

Second: yes, we are friends, but true friends must be honest with each other, without double standards. It is well known that Russia, in striving to achieve a cease-fire, to relieve the situation by political means without any kind of pressure, went further than anyone. Unfortunately, our opinion wasn't heeded. That led to our support for UN sanctions...

Nobody should be in any doubt as to the right of the Serb side, as of the other sides, to defend their own rights. But we are convinced that this should be on a defensive basis only, not going beyond the boundaries of self-defence. Unfortunately, in Bosnia and Herzegovina we come across other motives, based on hatred, ethnic intolerance, revenge. We categorically condemn such motives; they are unacceptable, regardless of who holds them.<sup>85</sup>

There is no doubt that this genuinely was the view of the key figures in the Foreign Ministry at that time. Regardless of other motivations behind the vote for sanctions – the desire to be part of a consensus view in 'international society' and not to alienate the West, particularly when the government was hoping for significant economic benefits – the interpretation of events was close to that in Western capitals. This also reflected the values of key Russian policy makers. Kozyrev in particular recognised the correlation between the red-brown alliance in Russia, and the Serb nationalists in former Yugoslavia, and believed that it was necessary to resist both. Hence, he warned in June that 'our "CPSU" and our red-browns are, completely logically, moving to assist their Serbian brothers-in-arms'.<sup>86</sup> This was a further reason to isolate such forces in Serbia:

Playing up to these forces would be a betrayal of friendship with Serbia and the neighbouring republics, and of Russia's long-term interests and positions in the Balkans, in Europe, and in the world as a whole. Because, if the Russian Federation

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Izvestiia* (30 June 1992).



were recklessly to support only the Serbian national-Bolsheviks out of all the South Slavs, it would be left in isolation in the Balkans, in the CSCE, and in the UN.<sup>87</sup>

## The reaction

Russia's vote for sanctions sparked a fierce debate in Russia over the government's policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts and its foreign policy orientation in general. The conflicts in Yugoslavia became the second most important foreign policy issue, after the 'near abroad'. I shall discuss this debate in relation to five arenas: the media, academic circles, nationalist and communist political organisations and societies outside parliament, public opinion, and the Supreme Soviet. In each of these areas, opinion was divided, and we can observe how those views reflected different political and moral outlooks.

### The media

As we have seen already in references from the Russian press, certain newspapers tended to adopt a particular approach, while others carried a variety of opinions. Elena Gus'kova suggests that, initially, newspapers were unwilling to publish articles expressing opinions that differed from the official stand, a legacy perhaps of the Communist era.<sup>88</sup> This was certainly not true by mid-1992 (and was not really true before that).<sup>89</sup> Firstly, there were a number of newspapers publishing opinions extremely opposed to the official line. These included the communist *Pravda*, the Defence Ministry's *Krasnaia zvezda*, the nationalist newspapers *Sovetskaia Rossiia* and *Literaturnaia Rossiia*, and the extreme nationalist *Russkii vestnik*, and *Den'*. Secondly, other papers presented a variety of opinions and interpretations: *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, *Moskovskie novosti*, *Moskovskaia pravda*. Gus'kova claims that certain newspapers 'persistently supported and implemented only one – official – policy', and lists *Izvestiia*, *Novoe vremia*, *Moskovskii komsomolets*, and *Komsomol'skaia pravda*.<sup>90</sup>

Yet *Izvestiia*, for one, undoubtedly presented a variety of opinions. Maksim Iusin and Andrei Ostal'skii tended to support the official policy. But other commentators were more critical. For example, a strongly critical article was printed a few days after sanctions vote, in which Boris Rodionov argued that sanctions would harm the ordinary population in Serbia and Montenegro rather than those 'ultras' actually carrying out

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<sup>87</sup> Kozyrev (8 June 1992).

<sup>88</sup> Gus'kova (1995a), p. 40.

<sup>89</sup> For a selection of newspaper articles showing the range of views, see Gus'kova (1993), chapter V, 'Chetvertaia vlast': put' k istine'.

<sup>90</sup> Gus'kova (1995a), p. 40.



atrocities in Bosnia; that sanctions might strengthen the position of more radical nationalists such as Vojislav Šešelj; that, although Russian interests did not consist in indulging the Belgrade military, they also did not consist in blaming Serbia for actions it had not committed; that Russia was likely to suffer from the sanctions in terms of reduced trade; and, finally, hypothesising that ‘perhaps, after the “splendid isolation” in Helsinki [the CSCE meeting at which Russia blocked expulsion of the FRY], were officials on Staraia and Smolensk squares simply afraid to risk the billions that the West is still promising?’<sup>91</sup>

As for the broadcasting media, it is difficult to gain a detailed impression from this distance of their coverage of the Yugoslav conflicts,<sup>92</sup> but transcripts of interviews and reports in *SWB* suggests that a wide range of views were covered. Kozyrev, however, accused television channels of a kind of self-imposed censorship:

Journalists from the TASS television service travelled with us during my visit to the republics of Yugoslavia. They took more risks than any of us, shooting honestly what was happening in Sarajevo. And what do you think happened? Our television didn't want to show their material! But before we left, they had talked about their keen interest. Obviously they expected it to turn out to be some kind of propaganda in favour of the national-patriotic regime in Belgrade, but what was clear from the film was that the Yugoslav army is fighting in Sarajevo, and these formations, of course, are supported and to a significant extent controlled by Belgrade. This kind of film appeared not to be needed.

He even went so far as to suggest that this indicated that journalists and editors were acting thus to protect themselves in the case of another coup by conservative forces, the ‘national-patriots’.<sup>93</sup>

### Academic opinions

The vote for sanctions revealed differences of opinion among Russian academics similar to those among media commentators.<sup>94</sup> At one end of the spectrum were those who broadly favoured official policy because they shared Kozyrev's liberal internationalist conceptions, opposed the ethnic nationalist policy of the Serbian leadership, and believed that Russia could and should co-operate with the West in

<sup>91</sup> Rodionov (4 June 1992).

<sup>92</sup> See chapter on Russia by Milena Michalski in Gow *et al* (1996) for a survey of the coverage of the war in Bosnia in May 1994 by the main news programme *Vremia*; Michalski concludes that this reporting conveyed a pro-Serbian bias.

<sup>93</sup> *Izvestiia* (30 June 1992).

<sup>94</sup> For a selection showing the range of views, see Gus'kova (1993), chapter IV, ‘Uchenye – za i protiv’.



attempting to curb such actions. Among these were Pavel Kandel'; A. Iaz'kova (expert on Romania) and V. Kamenetskii (expert on Yugoslavia) at the Institute of International Economic and Political Research (RAN); Nina Smirnova, expert on Albania at the Institute of General History (RAN); and Sergei Romanenko, expert on Yugoslav history at the Institute of Slavonic and Balkan Studies (RAN).

Kandel', for instance, wrote that 'Russia was left with no choice but to join the overwhelming majority of world society and support sanctions' after the Serbian government failed to 'use the last chance to leave the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina' provided by Russian mediation.<sup>95</sup> Iaz'kova and Kamenetskii also applauded the MFA's policy on the grounds that

the immediate cause of the outbreak of civil war in the summer of 1991 ... was the attempt by the Serbian government to unite with Serb Krajina... These were also the roots of the conflict between Serbia and Bosnia... In the conditions of the break-up of the Yugoslav federation the issue was, in this manner, about attempts at forceful revision of the internal borders. And this could not but lead to civil war, whatever kind of noble motives of 'defence of fellow ethnics – Serbs' the administration of Slobodan Milošević was guided by... The Serbian national-communist government turned out to be insusceptible to reasoned argument. The world community had no choice but to resort to sanctions. To the honour of the Russian government, it did not perceive this act as a 'warning' directed at itself ... and, having occupied a reasonable position against the exclusion of Yugoslavia (Serbia) from the CSCE, at the same time supported international sanctions against it.<sup>96</sup>

Then there were those who were more critical of official policy, believing that it was inconsistent and failed to defend Russia's interests as they perceived them, but who were critical too of the communist-nationalist opposition and of its allies in Belgrade. They included Andrei Edemskii, expert on Yugoslav-Russian relations at the Institute of Slavonic and Balkan Studies; and Nadia Arbatova, who – as I showed in chapter 3 – interprets the conflicts in neo-realist terms.

Thirdly, there were those who strongly opposed official policy. Often, this was from a realist stand-point, based on the argument that Russian policy did not embody a clear conception of national interests, taken to mean the protection of its historical position in the Balkans and its traditional historical allies. This in practice implied

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<sup>95</sup> Kandel' (1992), p. 421.

<sup>96</sup> Iaz'kova and Kamenetskii (12 July 1992).



support for Serbia and for the Bosnian Serbs. The vote for sanctions was interpreted as challenging Russian interests: powers eager to assert/re-assert control in the Balkans (in particular, Austria, Germany, and the United States) were using the fact that Russia was at that time too weak to protect its 'traditional ally' in order to weaken Serbia and limit Russia's influence. Although couched in realist terms, these arguments assumed some sort of commonality between Russia and Serbia: as traditional allies/'friends', as fellow Slav/Orthodox 'brothers', as contemporary victims of the West, or as nations sharing a common fate in the aftermath of the collapse of their former federations. This usually implied at least an underlying ethnic nationalist, neo-imperialist, or cultural Eurasianist or pan-Slav outlook.

Academics who displayed at least some of these viewpoints included Vladimir Volkov, director of the Institute for Slavonic and Balkan Studies; Elena Gus'kova; Pavel Volobuev; Liudmila Tiagunenko; and E. Eliseeva of IMEMO. For example, Eliseeva's interpretation of the conflicts is markedly different from that of Iaz'kova and Kamenetskii:

In the West, the actions of the Bosnian Serbs are synonymously associated with Belgrade, and the policy of the Serb government is classified as none other than a struggle for the creation of a 'Greater Serbia'.

Western politicians include in this concept an exclusively negative meaning. But if we consider the problem from the other side, if we recall, how for centuries suffering under the yoke of the Ottoman empire and scattered around the Balkan land the Serb people strove to unification, if we attempt to understand its mentality, then the politics of Serbia can be perceived as the striving to gather and unite the Serbs and to defend their interests. Especially since the rights of the Serb minority outside the republic are far from being always observed. The fundamental cause of the Serbo-Croat conflict is that in a referendum, the Serbs living on the territory of Croatia declared their own opposition to separating from Yugoslavia. Zagreb ignored the results of the referendum and attempted to compel the Serb population by force to leave the federation.<sup>97</sup>

It is difficult to calculate the influence that academic opinion had in political circles, but a group of academics of the latter conviction (including Volkov, Gus'kova, and Tiagunenko) appealed directly to parliament on two occasions in 1992. Their appeal to the Supreme Soviet in June displayed the full range of opposition complaints.

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<sup>97</sup> Eliseeva (4 August 1992), p. 429.



Accusing the MFA of lacking a well thought-out conception of Russia's long-term and short-term interests, they argued:

Today, associating with accusations against Serbia that are mainly unjust, actually means inflicting a violent blow against the traditional economic, political, historical, cultural and spiritual links between the Russian and Serbian peoples, between Russia and Yugoslavia, and, in our opinion, does not correspond with the long-term interests of Russia in this region of the world. If Russia had abstained in the vote [on sanctions], then the pressure on Belgrade would have been weakened.

Furthermore, they highlighted the similar circumstances of Russia and Serbia. They suggested that the sanctions vote was intended as a warning to Russia, and implied that, in the region of the former Soviet Union, Russia should adopt the kind of policy that Serbia was pursuing in the former Yugoslavia:

It can hardly be doubted that there is a further aim behind the adoption of sanctions against Serbia: it is an unambiguous warning to Russia in the case of its recalcitrance. The similarity of our problems is clear. Russia's joining in the blockade against Serbia actually means condemnation of Serbia's policy of defending its own compatriots in the other republics of the former SFRY.<sup>98</sup>

### **Nationalist-communist opposition**

Nationalist and communist groups operated at a number of levels: in parliament as parties, factions, and blocs, and outside parliament as countless different parties and groups, often associated through umbrella movements such as the Russian National Council (*Russkii natsional'nyi sobor*) and the Russian People's Assembly (*Rossiiskoe narodnoe sobranie*).<sup>99</sup> Many of these groups expressed opposition to official Russian policy towards Yugoslavia, usually calling for solidarity with Serbia and ethnic Serbs in former Yugoslavia on grounds of Slav or Orthodox solidarity, a position that Il'ja Levin calls 'neopanslavism'.<sup>100</sup> These protests took the form of appeals and declarations to parliament, the public, or to 'colleagues' in Yugoslavia,<sup>101</sup> as well as trips to former Yugoslavia and, in some cases, the recruitment of volunteers to fight in former Yugoslavia.

<sup>98</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (4 June 1992).

<sup>99</sup> See Tolz *et al* (14 May 1993).

<sup>100</sup> Levin (1995).

<sup>101</sup> For a number of examples, see Gus'kova (1993), chapter III, 'Ot serdtsa – k serdtsu: obrashcheniia, prizvyvy, pis'ma'.



One small taste of the rhetoric contained in these declarations should be sufficient to appreciate the flavour. In response to rumours that NATO was planning to intervene militarily in the Bosnian conflict, in January 1993 *Den'* published an appeal to the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation. It began:

Brother Slavs!

Today our fate is being decided! The 'New World Order', acting through its people in our governments, is not only robbing and destroying our countries, is not only provoking disorder and bloodshed throughout the world, in order then to establish its dominion: it is already this very month preparing an armed invasion inside the Slav world.

After accusing the enemies of the Serbs of monstrous propaganda, and Germany, the Vatican, and the rich Muslim states of fanning the flames of a Slavonic war, it warned:

If the Serbs are denied the support of Russians [*russskikh*], they are fated to disappear from the face of the earth, because they will defend themselves against the interventionists until the last man. And then it will be the turn of the Orthodox Russians, Ukrainians, Belorussians...

It then demanded the use of the Russian great power veto on actions against the FRY, and decisive measures by the Russian government to support the Serbs. Not surprisingly, it called for the Supreme Soviet to drive Kozyrev from office because he was conducting by all available means an 'anti-Slav policy, encapsulated above all in support for the destruction of the Serb people'. Finally, it issued a call to arms explicitly on the model of the 1870s:

If these measures are not taken, we appeal to you to remember the Slavonic committees, created in Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century, which criticised their own government for its insufficient support of Orthodox Slavs in their struggle for freedom and independence, sending to Serbia material help and officer-volunteers... We believe that our call will be heard also by the noble officers of Russia and of other countries.

Remember, if today they destroy the Serbs, tomorrow they will start on us.<sup>102</sup>

This appeal was signed by an extensive list of representatives of various extreme nationalist groups, a veritable 'Who's Who' of the Russian extreme right. There are the editors of the main nationalist newspapers, *Russkii vestnik*, *Sovetskaia Rossiia*, *Den'*, *Nash sovremennik*, *Literaturnaia Rossiia*. There are representatives from the larger

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<sup>102</sup> *Den'* (17-30 January 1993).



umbrella organisations and established political parties, including the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets), the movement of 'Russian National Unity', Dmitrii Vasil'ev, leader of the National Patriotic Front '*Pamiat*', the Russian National Council, and the National Salvation Front, which served as a forum to unite much of the right-wing and nationalist communist opposition (the appeal was signed by the Front's co-chairman Gennadii Ziuganov, who was soon to be elected chairman of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation).<sup>103</sup> It was also signed by individuals and representatives of even more esoteric groups: Alexandr Nevzorov, the presenter of the investigative television programme '600 seconds', the Council of the United Nobility Society of Russia, the Union of Officers, the Union of Cossacks, the Mothers of Russia movement, and the chief secretary of the Fund for the Restoration of the Christ the Saviour Cathedral.

The call to establish 'Slavonic committees' and to recruit volunteers to fight alongside Serbs did not go unanswered. From the beginning of 1992, there were Russian volunteers and mercenaries among the Serb troops in Bosnia.<sup>104</sup> However, they never numbered more than a few hundred at any one time. And there were also Russian volunteers/mercenaries fighting on the other side, against the Bosnian or Croatian Serbs.<sup>105</sup> Some may have been Muslim volunteers from the former Soviet Union and from the Russian Federation itself; one report stated that detachments were being trained in Chechnya to participate in combat operations in former Yugoslavia and to defend the Muslim population of Bosnia.<sup>106</sup>

The third way in which nationalists conveyed their solidarity with the Serbs was by visiting Belgrade and Bosnia. General Filatov, 'War Minister' in the shadow cabinet created by the National Salvation Front, the editors of the nationalist newspapers, including Aleksandr Prokhanov (editor of *Den*) and Aleksandr Dugin (editor of the magazine *Elementy*), Lieutenant General Vladislav Achalov (one of the leaders of the red-brown opposition among Russian officers and Ruslan Khasbulatov's military advisor), Eduard Limonov (who promised his hosts 'at least an atomic bomb' from Russia), Nikolai Burliaev (film director), all made the journey.<sup>107</sup>

But the most common visitors were members of parliament from the National Salvation Front. Levin estimates that one of every ten opposition deputies travelled to

<sup>103</sup> Tolz *et al* (14 May 1993), p. 24.

<sup>104</sup> For details, see Levin (1995); and *Moskovskie novosti* (6 December 1992).

<sup>105</sup> Nekrasov and Gubarev (16 February 1992).

<sup>106</sup> *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 28 April 1993, p. 3 [untitled].

<sup>107</sup> Levin (1995), p. 78; for Filatov's trip, see Vostrukhov (20 November 1992); for Limonov's trip, see his own account in Limonov (1993).



Yugoslavia between the end of 1992 and autumn 1993, meeting a range of people from Milošević to Šešelj. This obviously gave political support to Serbian nationalists, but Levin suggests that there may also have been material incentives for both sides, in particular sanctions-busting. Many of these deputies had their power base in the Russian regions, particularly in industrial towns in Siberia, and ‘many goods imported from Yugoslav companies (perhaps with falsified Austrian or British brand names) end up there’.<sup>108</sup>

## Public opinion

Russian extremist groups fitted the description of their nineteenth century counter-parts that Tolstoy gives in *Anna Karenina*. Referring to the growing movement in the 1870s to support the Serbs and Montenegrins against the Ottoman empire, Tolstoy writes that Koznyshev saw

that too many people were taking up the question from motives of self-interest and self-advertisement. He recognised that the newspapers printed much that was unnecessary and exaggerated for the sole purpose of attracting attention and out-crying their rivals. He noticed that the people who leaped to the front and shouted loudest in this general surge of enthusiasm were the failures and those who were smarting under a sense of injury – generals without armies, ministers without portfolios, journalists without papers, and party leaders without followers. He saw much that was frivolous and absurd.

There the similarity ends. Tolstoy continues:

But he also saw and admitted an unmistakable, ever-growing enthusiasm, uniting all classes, with which it was impossible not to sympathise. The massacre of Slavs who were co-religionists and brothers excited sympathy for the sufferers and indignation against their oppressors. And the heroism of the Serbians and the Montenegrins, fighting for a great cause, begot in the whole nation a longing to help brothers not only in word but in deed.<sup>109</sup>

In the first half of the 1990s there was no such feeling. Issues nearer to home were far more pressing. Many Russians presumably also realised that this was not a case of the ‘heroism of the Serbians and Montenegrins, fighting for a great cause’, and that the majority of the massacres of Slavs were being conducted *by* their co-religionists. Although there was a tendency to favour the Serbs, at least among the Orthodox

<sup>108</sup> Levin (1995), pp. 77-9; Baturin and Gryzunov (23 April 1993).

<sup>109</sup> Tolstoy (1978).



population of Russia, it was not universal and many people did not have strong opinions on the conflicts.<sup>110</sup> This lack of popular pressure enabled the government to resist opposition demands to support the Serbs more forcefully. There was, however, broad support for preserving Russia's status as a great power; one opinion poll taken in 1992 showed that 69 per cent of Muscovites agreed with the proposition that 'Russia must remain a great power, even if this leads to worse relations with the outside world'.<sup>111</sup> This shows that the neo-realist consensus that developed in the élite in 1993 enjoyed considerable backing among the general population, encouraging a more assertive policy in relation to the Yugoslav conflicts.

## Parliamentary opposition

The Supreme Soviet was dominated by nationalists/communists and state centrists, who opposed official Russian policy on ideological grounds. But there was a further dimension to parliamentary activity: leading committee members and most of all the speaker, Ruslan Khasbulatov, wanted to extend parliament's power, including over foreign policy. Hence the Yugoslav issue became a weapon in the institutional competition between the parliament and the government and president. In addition, the main target for many deputies was the domestic reform programme; it was only natural to attack also the foreign policy to which it was explicitly linked, including policy towards the Yugoslav crisis. Thus, within parliament there was a mixture of ideological antagonism towards the Yeltsin-Kozyrev Yugoslav policy, institutional rivalry with the government and MFA, and deep resentment over the Russia that they were creating.

## Institutional competition

Institutional rivalry had two facets. In any system of separation of powers, powers are never so sharply separate as to preclude conflict between the executive and the legislature if they have different political outlooks, and this is just as likely to extend to foreign policy. Part of the struggle in Russia, then, was an ideological conflict carried out in the forum of competing institutions. But, until a new constitution was approved, the very delineation of powers was also at issue. In other words, there was competition *over* the institutional prerogatives as well as *within* the boundaries already delineated.

The Supreme Soviet's resolution of 26 June reflected the parliament's ambitions. Point four required the MFA

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<sup>110</sup> See, for example, the following reports on opinion poll surveys: Mlechin (26 November 1994); Drobot (1995); *Interfax* (21 September 1995); Kondrashov (13 October 1995).

<sup>111</sup> Galeotti (1995), p. 174.



urgently to present to the Supreme Soviet detailed information about the key problems of foreign policy, defining the choice of strategically important decisions and questions affecting Russia's core state interests. To guarantee timely consultation on such questions with the Supreme Soviet Committee for international affairs and foreign economic relations.<sup>112</sup>

Nominally at least, Kozyrev showed a willingness to allow the Supreme Soviet a more active role in the formulation of foreign policy. He stated that this point of the resolution was an absolutely essential recommendation which he fully supported.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, he agreed with many deputies that it was essential to find time for discussions about a set of principles relating to international issues.<sup>114</sup> This, in fact, was not an idle boast: Kozyrev and his staff did appreciate the need to liaise with parliament. The Foreign Minister made more than forty speeches and statements in the White House in 1992, 'scores of speeches' were made by deputy ministers, and more than 120 speeches by other diplomats.<sup>115</sup>

Evgenii Ambartsumov, chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations (the most important foreign policy committee in the parliament) accepted that, on the whole, the MFA was aware of its obligations to parliament.<sup>116</sup> In general, he argued, there was co-operation between the Ministry and the Committee. Nevertheless, he argued that there were some cases when the Committee was given a *fait accompli*. One such example was the vote for sanctions.

Ambartsumov backed up this argument by referring to a document published in *Den*, which the newspaper claimed was a classified memorandum written by the Russian ambassador to the UN, Iulii Vorontsov, on the eve of the sanctions vote.<sup>117</sup> Ambartsumov pointed out that in the leaked memorandum, Vorontsov outlined two options for the MFA: to vote for sanctions or to abstain. If the former option was chosen, the ambassador apparently stated, this 'might cause difficulties for us [the MFA] with the Supreme Soviet'. But a note on the bottom of the document recorded that the response from the MFA was to vote for sanctions. In other words, the Supreme

<sup>112</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992b).

<sup>113</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992a), p. 89.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>115</sup> Savelyev and Huber (1993), p. 38.

<sup>116</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992a), p. 95.

<sup>117</sup> 'Memorandum' published in *Den* (7-13 June 1992). The document appears to have been genuine; although the MFA spokesman Sergei Iastrzhembskii called *Den*'s publication of the telegram 'a flagrant violation of the law', he did not attempt to deny its authenticity; Crow (24 July 1992), p. 32. Kozyrev later implicitly admitted as much: in a television interview in July, he said that 'even from the criminal publication of the secret document in "Den" newspaper, it is evident that this question [sanctions against the FRY] had been put to the Supreme Soviet'; *Russia TV* (4 July 1992).



Soviet was not consulted, and its opinion was not heeded. As Ambartsumov put it, the decision ‘only became known to us too *post factum*’. Although it was not necessary for the Foreign Ministry to agree every detail with the committee, he argued, this matter was not a ‘tactical choice’ but an ‘important strategic choice’.<sup>118</sup>

In fact, Ambartsumov was to become more satisfied with the behaviour of the Foreign Ministry. This was partly because Kozyrev did make an effort to liaise, as stated above, and also because he deliberately chose to involve the Committee for Foreign Affairs in decision making. For example, Ambartsumov was invited to take a place in the Russian delegation at the London Conference on Former Yugoslavia from 26 to 28 August 1992, apparently in the hope that this would pre-empt subsequent criticism of the MFA’s stance at the conference. Kozyrev assured him that he would not simply be an observer but would contribute.<sup>119</sup>

But Ambartsumov’s increased satisfaction was due also to the change of approach of Russian policy, not just the fact of participation in its formulation, as we shall see in the next chapter.

## **The Supreme Soviet debate**

The Supreme Soviet debated Yugoslavia on 26 June 1992. The debate began with an address by Kozyrev which was in many ways geared towards the specific audience:

From the very beginning we proceeded and will continue to proceed from the fact that this is a zone of our special interests because of historical traditions and because of cultural and other links which join Russia with this region.

However, Kozyrev’s desire both to appease the Supreme Soviet and to defend his own policy led to inconsistencies, since the two positions could not be reconciled. This was shown, for example, in his discussion of the possibility of imposing sanctions on Croatia, which many deputies were demanding:

the adoption of sanctions ... against Croatia is also negative, just as those against Serbia, since they hit the peaceful population, and so on. But, of course, to allow only one side be punished while the other had the possibility to act recklessly by military means – this is also unacceptable.<sup>120</sup>

Yet this is exactly what Russia had allowed to happen.

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<sup>118</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992a), p. 95.

<sup>119</sup> Crow (7 May 1993), p. 38.

<sup>120</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992a), p.86.



Nevertheless, Kozyrev stuck by the decision to vote for sanctions. And despite his conciliatory efforts, he highlighted the differences of approach of the Russian and Serbian governments in a manner that was likely to have riled the nationalists in parliament:

This tragedy is as if Russia, let's say, used the Armed Forces of the former Union against Belarus in response to its aspiration to establish its independence and sovereignty.<sup>121</sup>

Many deputies would probably have approved of such a course.

A major theme in the debate was that the vote for sanctions was 'over hasty' or 'premature'. Kozyrev rejected this. After reiterating the fact that Russian diplomats had successfully averted the expulsion of the FRY from the CSCE, he stated:

For a month we delayed the adoption of sanctions against ... Yugoslavia. We did this not because we consider it necessary recklessly to support the Belgrade government, which by its own actions leads Serbia and Montenegro to the continuation of a war with all the other Yugoslav republics, to a national catastrophe. But we did it because we consider it necessary to use everything possible of our special influence, our friendly influence on the Yugoslav republics.<sup>122</sup>

This defence was not accepted by the Supreme Soviet. Many deputies referred to a report by the United Nations Secretary General on the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina. There were accusations by deputies and in the press that the distribution of this report had been delayed deliberately through an agreement between Russia and the USA until after the sanctions vote in the UNSC.<sup>123</sup> Even if the report was not delayed deliberately, the vote was 'hasty' because the Security Council should have waited to see the contents.<sup>124</sup> The point was that the report supposedly showed that sanctions were not justified. According to Boris Rodionov in *Izvestiia*:

there were some very interesting things in the report! For example: 'There is no proof that the Belgrade government is in control of the situation in the new state, which is in the grip of civil war, or that it is exercising command over the Serbian armed formations in Bosnia.' Moreover, the report said that 'units of the Croatian army are not leaving Bosnian territory'.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>123</sup> Speech by Nikolai Pavlov, *ibid.*, p. 102.

<sup>124</sup> Speech by Ambartsumov, *ibid.*, p. 92.

<sup>125</sup> Rodionov (4 June 1992).

So, it is suggested that had the report been read and accepted, sanctions would not have been introduced against Serbia and Montenegro alone.

Kozyrev rejected the argument. He dismissed the relevance of the presence of Croatian troops on the grounds that it was not intervention since they were in Bosnia-Herzegovina at the request of the Bosnian government: 'The Bosnian government and all of the other republics do not recognise Serbia's intervention, but do recognise and invite Croatia,' he argued during the debate.<sup>126</sup> In addition, he insisted that those elements of the report stating that the Belgrade government did not bear sole responsibility were not only well-known to the MFA, but were actually included in the report on Russian insistence. However, sanctions were still justified against Serbia alone because Serbia bore 'not the only, not the exclusive responsibility, but the lion's share. Why? Because today Belgrade has the key levers of influence on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.'<sup>127</sup>

Kozyrev explained also that, as with the issue of FRY membership of the CSCE, Russia was isolated internationally on the question of sanctions. But by becoming independent and turning away from the Soviet past, Russia had committed itself to work with the United States, NATO, and so on, rather than return to confrontation.<sup>128</sup> This explanation would appear to support Rodionov's thesis that, after their isolation at the CSCE summit, Russian diplomats felt the need to accept the consensus at the United Nations on sanctions, especially, according to Kozyrev, after delaying the decision for a month. The Vorontsov memorandum seemed to prove this. Vorontsov apparently stated that the overwhelming majority of delegations saw sanctions as the only way to influence effectively the Serbian government and population as a whole (and thus prevent an even worse conflict in Kosovo). The memorandum also pointed out that many delegates in discussion with the Russian representatives had made it clear that the support by Russia of Belgrade in the CSCE and the UN was incorrectly interpreted by Belgrade as encouragement of its policy of creating a 'Greater Serbia'. Its author therefore proposed to vote for the resolution; this would signify unambiguous condemnation by Russia of any acts leading to the kindling of inter-ethnic enmity and conflict, attempts to re-draw borders and create ethnically pure regions, which 'has great significance from the point of view of containing such tendencies in the countries of the CIS'.<sup>129</sup> If the document was genuine, this shows that Vorontsov did not want Russia to

<sup>126</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992a), p. 106.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.

<sup>129</sup> *Den'* (7-13 June 1992).



be isolated in the UN. It also shows the liberal institutionalist approach to the problem of ethnic minorities, both in former Yugoslavia and in the former Soviet Union.

The key sentence in the memorandum as far as opposition forces were concerned was the comment that

it is very important also that we do not oppose on this point the Western European countries and the USA, where public opinion is very strongly against Milošević... Our country must not be associated personally with him, especially on the eve of the presidential summit in the USA.<sup>130</sup>

The implication was that continued Russian support of Milošević in the face of the unanimous opposition of Western states would harm Russian relations with the West and was consequently against Russia's interests. As we have seen, this was Kozyrev's view. But the fact that the imminent summit would involve discussions of a Western aid programme for Russia added to the feeling among opponents of official policy that that policy was being shaped by the need to get money from the West, leading Russia to abandon its principles and interests in the Balkans, or, as many put it, Russia's historical and natural ally. Rodionov also alluded to the fact that the stay of 'Monsieur Delors of the EC' in Moscow 'coincided with the Russian Federation's determination of its position'.<sup>131</sup>

Such supposed calculations were also apparently a source of resentment of Russia in the FRY itself. One report in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* even showed an implicit acceptance of the myth of Serbia's Christ-like suffering and betrayal:

People in Belgrade speak openly of betrayal, saying that Russia has knuckled under to the West and sold itself out, and that it is not even clear whether Russia will get its thirty pieces of silver – \$24 billion.<sup>132</sup>

### **The 'balanced' position of the state centrists**

The Supreme Soviet was dominated by, on the one hand, 'state centrists' who wanted an assertive great power foreign policy but supported domestic reform, and 'national-patriots' who wanted an aggressively nationalist and pan-Slavist foreign policy (and, among the left, a return to communism). Particularly prominent among the latter were Sergei Baburin and Nikolai Pavlov, leaders of the Russian All-People's Union, which advocated the re-creation of the USSR on a unitary basis.<sup>133</sup> They supported a pro-Serb

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Rodionov (4 June 1992).

<sup>132</sup> Kaverznev (18 June 1992).

<sup>133</sup> Pribylovsky (22 April 1994), p. 33.

policy towards the conflicts. Many deputies in the Supreme Soviet or Congress of People's Deputies also had links with the 'red-brown' groups discussed previously.

The most prominent proponents of a 'neo-realist' position in the Supreme Soviet were Ambartsumov and Rumiantsev. They were critical of official policy because it was too pro-Western and not independent and did not protect Russia's 'national interests'; at the same time they were careful to distinguish their position from that of the 'red-brown' coalition, those who openly supported Milošević and Serb extreme nationalist leaders. This position was stated very clearly by Rumiantsev during the Supreme Soviet debate:

During his trip to the Balkans, Andrei Vladimirovich [Kozyrev] said one very remarkable phrase which inspired in me great confidence. He said that Russia ought more often to act solo in the Balkans. But, very unfortunately, this good phrase, which could become the basis of our new Balkans policy, didn't lead to real actions because our voice was drowned in the general chorus of protest against Yugoslavia and practical protest against Serbia, which was indirectly, of course, a strike aimed at the new Russia. Against new Russia. Consequently, in my view, it is very important today not to give up the idea of patriotism to the ultra-right forces, but our Foreign Ministry policy ought to proceed from a conception of patriotic policy, if you like, because our foreign policy today ought to become a buttress of patriotism.<sup>134</sup>

In his contribution to the Supreme Soviet debate, Ambartsumov called on Russia to adopt a 'balanced' policy. He argued that the UN Secretary-General's report showed that all sides were guilty, which made it 'incomprehensible' that sanctions were then directed only against one side, Serbia. Sanctions were one-sided when Croat and Muslim forces were also participating in the war: 'In general, the impression is that the world community, above all the West, has occupied in relation to an internal conflict a position that was not fully just,' he argued. Sanctions were harsher than those adopted against Iraq, which had been guilty of a clear case of aggression against another state, whereas the Bosnian conflict was an inter-ethnic conflict, a 'very complex, tangled situation'. Russia, he suggested, should adopt an objective stance: 'we ought to proceed from the defence of human rights, from a just, objective position to all sides.'<sup>135</sup> Being critical of the sanctions vote did not mean 'pitting themselves against the international

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<sup>134</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992a), p. 103.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 92-3.



community'; after all, China had abstained and it had 'hardly been castigated for this'.<sup>136</sup>

Ambartsumov was influential in shaping the Supreme Soviet resolution on Yugoslavia, which was initiated in the Committee for Foreign Affairs. As well as point four already quoted, the resolution called on the government

1. to maintain a balanced, objective approach to all sides in the Yugoslav crisis in the light of the real role and responsibility of each participant in the armed conflict;
2. to guarantee the conduct of a foreign policy line, excluding the possibility of armed intervention from outside in the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina by any country or group of countries, whatever the pretext. At the same time to augment international mediation efforts with the purpose of achieving a political settlement to the conflict. To enable the unobstructed supply of humanitarian aid to the republic;
3. to instruct the MFA to study the possibility of a resolution in the UNSC for a reduction in the sanctions in relation to the FRY established by UNSC resolution 757, or for the introduction of a moratorium on their application in response to the receipt of evidence of the readiness of the FRY to carry out the directions included in the points of the resolution.<sup>137</sup>

To what extent was Ambartsumov's position and that of the committee a 'balanced, objective' position? Ambartsumov did not ignore Russia's supposedly traditional links with Serbia, although he argued that they should not be the sole basis for policy. For example, during the debate, he stated that

the position of the committee is defined not only, and not so much by, the fact that Russia traditionally had friendly relations with Serbia, although of course it is impossible to discard this, and the traditions of our foreign policy from the equation.<sup>138</sup>

And one comment in particular has been quoted by many Western commentators: 'It would hardly seem obligatory that Russia, which naturally has its own state interests, duplicate the US position in all respects – a position that is by no means always indisputable.'<sup>139</sup> Russia, then, had its 'own state interests' and should take into account

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<sup>136</sup> Ambartsumov (29 June 1992).

<sup>137</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992b).

<sup>138</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (26 June 1992a), p. 92.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

its traditional pro-Serb policy. Russia should pursue its own interests, acting as a corrective to the West's anti-Serb stance, although this need not jeopardise relations with the West: there should be no trade-off between support on sanctions and aid/trade from the West (which Ambartsumov supported), since these were separate issues.

Unfortunately, it was never fully specified what exactly Russia's 'own state interests' in the Yugoslav conflicts were, except that they must be different from those of the West and the United States in particular. This means that Ambartsumov proposed a policy that was still not derived directly from Russia's interests in relation to the conflicts, but only in relation to the West; and then in a superficial manner, based on the assumption that Russia, as a great power, must have interests distinct from other great powers. This was a simplistic, realist approach of maximising power on a zero-sum model.

Furthermore, if Russia was to pursue its own interests in relation to the conflicts, this could not by definition be an 'objective and fair approach to a complicated ethnic conflict', as Ambartsumov also claimed.<sup>140</sup> If Russia took into account its supposed traditional pro-Serb policy and friendly relations with Serbia, this was extremely unlikely to lead to an 'objective' position. And, in fact, Ambartsumov's actions and statements did suggest a pro-Serb bias.

In August 1992, he visited former Yugoslavia (at the invitation of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, SANU) with Rumiantsev, where they met Panić, Ćosić, and Karadžić, but no Croat or Bosnian Muslim leaders.<sup>141</sup> The aim, Ambartsumov said, was to 'facilitate efforts to overcome the one-sided position that the international community has taken in the Yugoslav conflict'; but, as Maksim Iusin comments, they were unlikely to succeed by meeting representatives of only one side.<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, they claimed that the situation in Yugoslavia was being distorted: 'we intend to dispel some myths,' Rumiantsev said, 'particularly the myth of the concentration camps on the territory of Yugoslavia'.<sup>143</sup> Naturally, setting out with such an intention made its fulfilment more likely. Ambartsumov concluded that the refugee camps he saw were like 'poor quality sports camps' serving free food 'perfectly decent by contemporary Moscow standards'. Description of the camps as concentration camps was

<sup>140</sup> Ambartsumov (25 August 1992).

<sup>141</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (5 August 1992); Iusin (11 August 1992).

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> Crow (6 November 1992), p. 14.



‘disinformation’.<sup>144</sup> And, according to Agence France-Presse, Ambartsumov told journalists in Belgrade that the Supreme Soviet would insist that Russia ally itself with Belgrade at the international conference on Yugoslavia due to open in London later in August.<sup>145</sup> In particular, Ambartsumov was pushing for closer Russian support of the federal government and president. He hoped, in particular, to arrange a meeting between Yeltsin and Panić, but this did not happen.<sup>146</sup>

The contention that Ambartsumov and Rumiantsev wanted a more pro-Serb emphasis in official policy is borne out by subsequent declarations. For instance, in August, after Russia had supported UNSCRs 770 and 771 enabling the use of military force to ensure the supply of humanitarian aid to Bosnia-Herzegovina and to gain access to detention camps in the FRY, Rumiantsev said that Russia’s position on the situation in the Balkans was ‘not quite right’, and warned that the United States would conclude from Russia’s handling of affairs in the region that the Balkans had ceased to be counted in Russia’s sphere of influence.<sup>147</sup>

Also illustrative is their position on Macedonia. Khasbulatov, Rumiantsev, and Ambartsumov all criticised the decision to recognise Macedonia.<sup>148</sup> This was surprising, given the fact that here was perhaps the clearest example of an independent Russian initiative. In fact, Ambartsumov cited it as an example that ‘Russia today is beginning to play a much more noticeable role in the regulation of the Yugoslav conflict, a more independent role’.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, the decision to recognise a republic with a majority Slav and Orthodox population, linked with Russia by close historical and cultural ties, might be expected to garner support even from the ‘patriotic’ opposition.<sup>150</sup> But state centrists objected to the decision because recognition complicated relations with Greece and came at an inopportune time. From their point of view, Greece was an important ally in the region and should not be offended. According to Ambartsumov, more attention should have been paid to Greece’s position since it plays an important role ‘in countering the Islamic *révanchism* that threatens the region from the Adriatic to the Black and Caspian Seas’.<sup>151</sup> But, as Iusin dryly remarks:

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.* Iusin points out that if they truly intended to be objective, they would have awaited the final conclusions of the international commissions that were checking the accuracy of reports of concentration camps; Iusin (11 August 1992).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>146</sup> Crow (7 May 1993), p. 38.

<sup>147</sup> Crow (6 November 1992), p. 14.

<sup>148</sup> Crow (13 November 1992), p. 37. We might suspect that Khasbulatov objected on the principle that any action by the Foreign Ministry must be opposed.

<sup>149</sup> Ambartsumov (13 August 1992).

<sup>150</sup> Iusin (5 August 1992).

<sup>151</sup> Iusin (11 August 1992).

Just what this threat is and from whom it emanates Ambartsumov did not specify. Nor did he explain, unfortunately, how recognising Orthodox Macedonia will lead to growing Islamic *révanchism*, especially in the region adjacent to the Caspian Sea.<sup>152</sup>

## Conclusions

On the eve of the anniversary of the August 1991 *putsch*, Kozyrev published an article in *Nezavisimaia gazeta* in which he stated again the basic tenets of his foreign policy approach. Comparing the Belgrade leadership to those who had tried to come to power a year previously in Moscow, he argued that the reason why Serbia found itself an international outcast while Russia had an ‘unprecedentedly favourable international environment’, was not because of some ‘imaginary Slavophobia of the West’, but because on 19 August 1991, Russians [*rossiiane*] rejected the forceful preservation of the Soviet Union, and avoided stirring inter-ethnic tensions and using the army to punish those striving for sovereignty and independence. ‘In Belgrade, unfortunately, just such a line has predominated until now,’ he wrote.<sup>153</sup>

Kozyrev divided opponents of his policy into ‘national-Bolsheviks’ and ‘national-democrats’. There was no need to explain why ‘an alliance with the national-Bolsheviks in Belgrade so attracts our national-Bolsheviks’. The ‘national-democrats’, however, were motivated particularly by anti-Western feeling. Kozyrev argued that the logic of their position was really quite simple: ‘as “democrats”, they don’t stand hand-in-hand with the Bolsheviks’, but as ‘nationalists, a union with the cosmopolitan West is sickening’. The position of the ‘national-democrats’ was also muddled by the ‘notorious Slav factor’ in foreign policy:

There is no doubt that this factor to a certain degree ought to be taken into account in the policies of a state with an enormous Slav population. But this relates by no means only to the Serb national-Bolsheviks, who, by the way, are acting against the national interests of the Serb Slavs themselves, but also to all the Slav peoples of the former Yugoslavia. Don’t forget that even the Muslims in Bosnia are also Slavs...<sup>154</sup>

Basing policy on the ‘Slavonic’ or ‘Orthodox’ factor created dangers in relation to other powers and also within the Russian Federation itself:

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<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Kozyrev (20 August 1992).

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*



Any attempt to divide Europe into Slavonic, Germanic or French communities threatens to return to the situation not even of the second, but the first world war, and if applied to the Yugoslav crisis, for the second time in history to make Serbia the detonator of global catastrophe. Secondly, such an ethnic-religious foreign policy would be anti-Russian, since it could promote the division of Russia itself, where alongside millions of Orthodox Slavs live millions of people of other nationalities and faiths, in particular Muslims.<sup>155</sup>

In fact, Russia's multi-national character, its many languages and religions, provided a 'rich, broad palate' for its foreign policy, which was especially important, given its Eurasian position, for developing good relations with all its neighbours.<sup>156</sup>

This was to be the last such categorical statement by Kozyrev of an unfettered liberal internationalist approach. Increasingly, diplomats came to emphasise Russian geo-political interests, and its rights rather than duties as a great power. This was reflected in a shift in policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts that began towards the end of 1992 and was both a result of, and a contributor to, the change in overall foreign policy. It was in part a political reaction to the concerted domestic political opposition to official policy, but it also showed that key foreign policy actors now believed that changes were necessary. In particular, there was the feeling that Western powers were taking Russian support for granted and were taking advantage of Russia's weakness to further their own interests in the Balkans. Many Russian policy makers believed that Russia should now define its own interests in relation to the conflicts and devise an independent policy to protect them.

In addition, the issue of NATO's role in the post-Cold War international system began to affect Russia's relations with the West. Across the Russian political spectrum it was believed that NATO must not be allowed to dominate the security structure of Europe by taking new members, former allies of the Soviet Union. Nor should it intervene militarily outside its borders in regions in which Russia still had interests. This was to have a major impact on Russian policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts from 1992, as Russia defined its primary interest in relation to the conflicts as keeping NATO out of former Yugoslavia.

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<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

## Chapter 5

### Transitional phase: autumn 1992 – end 1993

Domestic criticism and developments in foreign policy thinking in general, as outlined in chapter 2, began to have a perceptible influence on Russian policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts in the summer of 1992. Previously, Yeltsin had not been directly involved in foreign policy, restricting himself to the occasional dramatic gesture, such as announcing the decision to recognise Macedonia. But he now realised that, with the sustained opposition attack on it, the liberal Westernising policy could be a political liability. Hence, he himself criticised the Foreign Ministry's approach as well as the West's attitude towards Russia. Addressing the MFA's collegium on 27 October, he stated:

We have acquired a reputation as a state that answers 'yes' to all proposals, whether or not they are advantageous to us. What's more, we have started to put up with slights and even insults, we allow Russia to be treated in ways which would be unacceptable to any other great power. But Russia is not a country that can be kept in the waiting room. In any such instance, we must express our disappointment in the partner which has been tactless, and that includes America.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of 1993, policy had evolved into a neo-realist or state centric approach. This enabled the administration to build a domestic consensus behind its policy; although the 'intransigent opposition' continued to attack all aspects of domestic and foreign policy, centrist critics were now more happy to support it, although it took the Sarajevo crisis (chapter 6) to prove that this really was the MFA's new line. Hence, Russian policy went through a transitional phase from the liberal Westernising of the first half of 1992, to the unambiguous great power policy of 1994.

In relation to policy to the Yugoslav conflicts, there was no sudden change, no dramatic break with the West; instead, two elements gradually emerged in the Russian approach. Firstly, diplomats adopted what they considered to be a more neutral stance towards the combatants, distinct from Western opinion, which they considered anti-Serb. According to Viacheslav Bakhim, head of the Foreign Ministry's Department for International Humanitarian and Cultural Co-operation, decisions of international fora on Yugoslavia were often unilateral and provoked a 'hunted down' complex, and so Russia was acting not from pro-Serb but against anti-Serb positions.<sup>2</sup> Sergei Lavrov, deputy

<sup>1</sup> Shinkarenko (29 October 1992); see also Lepingwell (6 November 1992).

<sup>2</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (26 February 1993).



foreign minister, expressed the Russian position unequivocally in February 1993: 'it is impossible in this conflict to determine who is right and who is wrong'.<sup>3</sup> This echoed the claim by many parliamentarians that, since this was a civil war, each side bore equal responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

Adopting a 'balanced' position served the purpose of distinguishing Russia's policy from that of the West, and was therefore aimed partly at domestic critics. But the motivation behind this was not solely instrumentalist nor simply a reaction to domestic criticism: it was also a matter of genuine belief. It was generally believed in Russia that Western policy makers, in response to media pressure, were viewing the conflict simplistically and were unjustifiably singling out the Serbs for blame.

The second element was the emphasis now placed on the necessity for Russian involvement in conflict mediation for former Yugoslavia. As stated in chapter 2, this reflected a shift from emphasis on *duties* as a great power to *rights* as a great power. The shift was partly because policy makers believed that Russia was being ignored in the peace process, whereas it should automatically be included, but it also demonstrated the more assertive approach in foreign policy as a whole. Kozyrev now began to respond to criticism that, by apparently being too pro-Western and too subservient, Russian support was taken for granted while it was side-lined in the conflict resolution process. Nevertheless, this heightened assertiveness still applied within the framework of co-operation with the West. Policy makers were not prepared to sacrifice good relations with what they called their 'partners' for the sake of an alliance with the Serbs, while any close alliance as demanded by the red-brown opposition was unacceptable if it was based on the principle of pan-Slav/Orthodox solidarity.<sup>5</sup>

## The London Conference

Russian diplomacy at the London Conference on the former Yugoslavia, which took place from 26-28 August 1992, illustrates this new emphasis in Russia's approach. This joint UN-EC conference was an attempt to bring the major powers into the mediation process as well as to reincorporate the United Nations. The EC had taken the lead from the end of 1991 but had failed to halt the fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and there were doubts about its impartiality and suspicions that certain of its members were in fact pursuing their own interests.<sup>6</sup> A more inclusive conference gave Russia the opportunity

<sup>3</sup> Lukic and Lynch (1996), p. 343.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Parkhomenko (30 April 1994).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, comments by Kozyrev in Kuznetsova (16 February 1993).

<sup>6</sup> Baev (1994a), pp. 40-1.

to establish its involvement, to prove its significance in relation to the Yugoslav conflict, and to ensure that a 'balanced' approach was preserved.

The conference established a set of principles that any future peace agreement would need to guarantee, as well as some preliminary procedures to promote them and to alleviate the suffering of the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina. The principles included the recognition of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state and the inviolability of its borders, acceptance by all sides that territory could not be acquired by force, and constitutional guarantees on human rights and fundamental freedoms of members of ethnic and national communities. A continuous negotiating forum – the International Conference on Former Yugoslavia (ICFY) – was set up to find an agreement that would secure these principles; it was co-chaired by a UN Representative, Cyrus Vance, and a representative of the EC, Lord Owen. The most significant immediate demands were for the Bosnian Serb forces, which occupied over seventy per cent of the country, to withdraw from those territories acquired by force, and to hand over heavy weapons within range of major cities to UN forces within seven days. The conference aimed also to establish better conditions to guarantee the delivery of humanitarian aid, and demanded the immediate dismantling of concentration camps.<sup>7</sup>

Russian delegates were quick to highlight the positive role that Russia had played in the conference. Both Kozyrev and his deputy, Vitalii Churkin, claimed that they had prevented the conference from collapsing. On the last day, the Serbian delegation had refused to return to the hall after a recess because it appeared that a resolution condemning the Serbs would be adopted on the insistence of the Bosnian government. Churkin boasted afterwards that John Major appealed directly to the Russian delegation, which held intensive talks and, by persuading the Serbs that the documents being adopted were sufficiently balanced and did not encroach on their interests,<sup>8</sup> 'managed to hammer out a formula for the conclusion of the conference which allowed all delegations to return to the negotiating table'. 'It is quite obvious,' he concluded, 'that our work was appreciated not just by the Yugoslav sides, but also by other participants in the conference'.<sup>9</sup>

Russian diplomats believed that they were able to play an intermediary role because they adopted a 'balanced position', neither anti- nor pro-Serb. As Churkin put it:

<sup>7</sup> Lukic and Lynch (1996), p. 341; Gow (1997a), pp. 224-232.

<sup>8</sup> Shchedrunova (29 August 1992).

<sup>9</sup> *Maiak Radio* (29 August 1992).



I think we can state with every confidence that, in the first place, we again confirmed that our position is a balanced one... In other words, we do not succumb to extremist solutions. We are not adopting a blanket anti-Serb position, as some representatives are doing. But at the same time we are not offering the Serbs any guarantees along the lines of "we are your traditional friends – we won't let anything happen to you, we will help you." ... we are telling them: "we realise how difficult the situation is. If you wish to help yourselves, we are here, we are prepared to do what needs to be done."<sup>10</sup>

Churkin believed that Russia played a 'substantial, independent role' in ensuring that the conference achieved what he considered were substantial results.<sup>11</sup> This opinion was shared by many commentators in the Russian press.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the outcome of the conference proved not to be as auspicious for the achievement of peace as these evaluations might have led people to believe. According to James Gow, this was because the follow-through was weak, as the relevant powers sat back in satisfaction rather than acting on the initiative created in London.<sup>13</sup> And Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch point to the fact that unlike with Iraq, 'no timetable for military action in the event of the failure to observe these conditions was established, and in the end Serbia was able to avoid the infliction of military action by the West in spite of the fact that none of the agreed conditions sanctioned by the United Nations and the major NATO powers was observed.'<sup>14</sup>

Kozyrev, they claim, was quick to point out the 'loopholes in Western diplomacy' in his briefing for Russian journalists after the conference; although he spoke of a sharpening of sanctions and international isolation for Serbia if it did not consent to an acceptable settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, 'he pointedly did not mention (nor did his Western interlocutors) the possibility of military action against Serbia'.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, neither did he rule out punitive action against violators of the conference principles.<sup>16</sup> But Lynch and Lukic's interpretation is borne out by subsequent statements by MFA representatives. During a Foreign Ministry briefing on 2 September 1992, for example, spokesman Sergei Iastrzhembskii said that Russia believed that a mechanism for reaching a settlement had been defined at the London Conference and there was 'even less justification than previously in discussing a hypothetical chance of a military

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Shchedrunova (29 August 1992).

<sup>13</sup> Gow (1997a), p. 225.

<sup>14</sup> Lukic and Lynch (1996), p. 341

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Edemskii (1996), note 29, p. 49.

intervention in Yugoslavia'.<sup>17</sup> Russia would continue to support the ICFY and the 'constructive forces' of Panić and Čosić. Unfortunately, this failed to take into account the fact that, with the military advantage on their side, the Bosnian Serbs had little incentive to accept the London principles (in particular, the demand that territorial gains could not be made by force), but willingly continued negotiating in order to avert outside intervention; while, in the FRY, Milošević retained his grip on power. But the Russian resistance to a military intervention shows the MFA's shift towards the centrist position after the sanctions debate.

Kozyrev commented after the conference that not only was there a pooling of efforts at the world level, but also at the national level. He expressed particular satisfaction at Ambartsumov's support for the delegation.<sup>18</sup> Ambartsumov, on his part, seemed satisfied with the positive reception that his input had received, and noted that Russia's policy had become 'more adequate'. He claimed that it was thanks to the joint efforts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Supreme Soviet committee that the leaders of all the former Yugoslav republics were represented on an equal basis, a refrain taken up by Kozyrev in a speech to the Supreme Soviet in October.<sup>19</sup> Expressing admiration for the way Russia's diplomats had worked, Ambartsumov singled out Churkin for showing exceptional expertise.<sup>20</sup> This admiration was presumably based not only on respect for Churkin's professionalism, but also for his policy priorities: it was Churkin in particular who argued that by being more independent, Russia could establish its great power priorities. In fact, Churkin's conclusions about the conference chimed exactly with Ambartsumov's policy recommendations that I discussed in the previous chapter: an important result of Russian diplomacy at the London Conference, Churkin said, was that 'we demonstrated that we have our own voice, that we have our own views and that these views are listened to'.<sup>21</sup>

## Government-opposition relations

Official policy was now closer to the views of the state centrists, or neo-realists – typified by Ambartsumov – who were less critical of the official line than previously. At the Supreme Soviet session of 17 December 1992, deputy foreign minister Anatolii Adamishin claimed that the MFA was definitely working in the direction defined by the

<sup>17</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (2 September 1992).

<sup>18</sup> Shchedrunova (29 August 1992).

<sup>19</sup> Ambartsumov (25 August 1992); Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (22 October 1992).

<sup>20</sup> Crow (7 May 1993), p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> *Maiak Radio* (29 August 1992).



Supreme Soviet resolution of July.<sup>22</sup> This was an opinion that Ambartsumov appeared to share. At the Supreme Soviet session of 18 February 1993, he welcomed the fact that the approach of the Foreign Ministry had greatly changed, particularly regarding the Yugoslav question:

We often argue with minister Kozyrev, deputy minister Churkin, but I can say that actually, thanks to the actions of the MFA, the possibility of the use of collective sanctions, the possibility of carrying out collective military intervention on the territory of the former Yugoslavia from the side of the world community, has now been put into the background.<sup>23</sup>

Nevertheless, there remained some distance between official policy and the policy that Ambartsumov wanted to see implemented. He wanted a more overtly realist approach to the conflicts, not merely in the instrumental sense of demonstrating the importance of Russia through conflict mediation in the Balkans, but basing policy on the identification of the Balkans as a Russian sphere of interest and Serbia as a potential ally:

But now the task is for Russia to carry out a more active policy and not simply to enable an end to the bloodshed – this is the paramount task – but to occupy its own position in the Balkans, to insist on the national-state interests of Russia, which cannot be abstracted from the interests of Yugoslavia, and to find corresponding political means to achieve this.<sup>24</sup>

However, Ambartsumov clearly distinguished his own position from that of the red-brown coalition. For instance, at the December 1992 Supreme Soviet session, he called on deputies to accept the resolution adopted by his committee as the basis for the Supreme Soviet resolution, and ‘not to inflame passions ... not to set itself against the world community’.<sup>25</sup> The more hard-line opposition deputies were not prepared to accept this, in their desire to support the Serbs and oppose the West. They were also intent on attacking the MFA and Yeltsin for political reasons and were critical of Ambartsumov’s conciliatory approach. S. Sh. Dzhamaldinov, for example, wanted Ambartsumov to explain how the MFA’s policy was improving if sanctions were still in place after parliament had been talking about lifting them for eight months.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (17 December 1992a).

<sup>23</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (18 February 1993a), p. 172. See also his comments in Pushkov (28 February 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (18 February 1993a), p. 173.

<sup>25</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (17 December 1992a), p. 133.

<sup>26</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (18 February 1993a), p. 175.

But ideological divisions also extended into the administration. The most striking anomaly was the position of Vice-President Alexandr Rutskoi, who increasingly associated with the red-brown opposition forces. His interpretation of the Yugoslav conflicts matched that of the hard-line realists and the red-brown coalition. For example, in May 1993, addressing the organising committee of the so-called Conference of Spiritually Related (Eastern Orthodox) Peoples, he described the conflict as a 'fight for spheres of interest in international relations'. Rather than allow 'foreign interest' to impose itself on the region, the people of former Yugoslavia should seek a way out the conflict by themselves.<sup>27</sup> Such pronouncements hardly contributed to the MFA's diplomatic efforts at that time.

### **Institutional competition**

The Supreme Soviet's resolution of 17 December 1992 on the Yugoslav crisis instructed the Russian government to order the MFA to take necessary measures to avert external military intervention, not excluding in case of extreme necessity the use of the veto in the UNSC; to put to the UNSC the question of introducing sanctions against all three sides responsible for the continuation of the conflict; and not to allow the lifting of the arms embargo. It also required the government to decide the question of re-establishing humanitarian supplies to the FRY within two weeks.<sup>28</sup> The resolution was passed overwhelmingly, with 151 votes in favour, 5 against, and 13 abstentions. Contrary to the opinion of some pro-government commentators such as Maksim Iusin in *Izvestiia*,<sup>29</sup> this was not a particularly radical resolution if one considers the views of many opposition deputies. Ambartsumov's influence was clearly prominent.

The MFA was irritated partly by the timing of the resolution, coming a few days before elections in the FRY (see below). Iusin claims that the Supreme Soviet ignored a request from the MFA to delay its decision at least for a few days:

the haste shown by the resolution's authors was no accident. The Russian parliament's *démarche*, coming three days before the presidential election in Serbia, will strengthen the hand of Slobodan Milošević and the alliance of former Communists and nationalists that backs him.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *Tanjug* (19 May 1993).

<sup>28</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (17 December 1992b).

<sup>29</sup> Iusin (18 December 1992). Iusin claimed that the point in the resolution about humanitarian aid proposed that Russia should act unilaterally, in circumvention of the international sanctions.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*



The MFA's other main objection to the resolution was the Supreme Soviet's 'interference' in the affairs of the Ministry. One leading MFA official told journalists that meddling in Russia's foreign policy by 'non-professionals', most often by 'those who appear at the microphone in the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People's Deputies', could carry very serious consequences: 'A car cannot have 249 or 1,049 drivers. This is dangerous for the passengers and for international road travel'. Furthermore, this very important decision was adopted by the parliament practically by 'word of mouth', without the advice of experts; and, in his view, the document violated the principle of the separation of powers.<sup>31</sup> And Kozyrev objected that 'the resolution appears to constitute direct interference in the affairs of the executive authorities. Even President Yeltsin never gives us [the MFA] such detailed instructions.'<sup>32</sup>

Hence, the institutional competition continued with disputes over which body should shape foreign policy, but parliament was by no means solely to blame. Tatiana Bogdasarova in *Moskovskie novosti* described the deficiencies in the MFA's handling of relations with parliament:

Once Russia's position is formulated, it is essential to know how to 'sell' it to the public, the news media and, finally, the legislative branch. To all appearances, our Ministry of Foreign Affairs realised this much too late and, on the whole, was ineffective in this area... One sometimes got the impression that Smolensk Square was deliberately provoking the Russian parliament, alienating even its own potential allies in Balkan affairs.

Bogdasarova claims that a point of confrontation was reached between the Supreme Soviet and the MFA which resulted in the resolution of 17 December; she suggests that the confrontation was caused 'not so much by fundamental differences as by the absence of a good working relationship and proper information on the Foreign Ministry's part'.<sup>33</sup> This is undoubtedly over-stating the case; there *were* major differences of policy between the MFA and many deputies, particularly of the red-brown coalition. But she is right to point out that, despite the efforts to include Ambartsumov in policy making and to liaise with parliament, Kozyrev at times alienated the centrist deputies whose support he needed, by his style as much as by his policy.

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<sup>31</sup> *Interfax* (18 December 1992).

<sup>32</sup> *Iusin* (19 January 1993).

<sup>33</sup> *Bogdasarova* (3 January 1993).

One example occurred only days before the December resolution. Kozyrev's speech in Stockholm at the meeting of the CSCE on 14 December 1992 began with the bald statement: 'I must make amendments to the conception of Russian foreign policy', and continued:

We see as essentially unaltered – although there has been some evolution – the objectives of NATO and the Western European Union, which are working out plans to strengthen their military presence in the Baltics and other regions on the territory of the former Soviet Union and to interfere in the internal affairs of Yugoslavia. The sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia were evidently dictated by this course. We demand that they are rescinded, and if this is not done, we reserve the right to take unilateral measures necessary to defend our interests. The current government of Serbia can count on the support of great Russia in its struggle.

He went on to define the former Soviet space as an area in which Russia would use all means to defend its interests, and concluded:

All those who hope to be able to disregard these special features and interests, who hope that the fate of the Soviet Union is lying in wait for Russia, should not forget that they are dealing with a state that is able to stand up for itself and its friends.

After a break of half an hour, Kozyrev returned to the hall and explained that it had all been a hoax:

I want to assure you ... that neither President Yeltsin, who remains the leader and guarantor of Russian domestic and foreign policy, nor I, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, will ever agree to what I read out in my earlier speech... The text that I read out before is a rather thorough compilation of the demands that are being made by what is by no means the most extreme opposition in Russia. The sharp words in my speech have no official force. They were merely a tactic – to show the danger that would be posed if events were to develop differently.<sup>34</sup>

The demands certainly were not just those of the 'most extreme opposition', since much of what Kozyrev had said embodied key elements of the centrist, neo-realist criticism of official policy.<sup>35</sup> And, in fact, Ambartsumov, while tactfully declining to

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<sup>34</sup> Iusin (15 December 1992).

<sup>35</sup> A point also made by Iusin, who claims that according to information from reliable sources, 'most of the theses that the Minister used were taken from an article by a well-known figure in the Civic Union'; *ibid.*



comment on the unusual tactics of the Minister of Foreign Affairs while he was still attending the conference, did question Kozyrev's comments regarding Serbia:

It seems to me that the minister's approach, striving to compromise the very fact of possible support for the people of Serbia is ... extremely unreasonable... I don't understand why a strictly favourable attitude towards Serbia – not, of course, to those carrying out murder and persecution, but to the Serbian people – should be considered a reactionary policy, unacceptable for Russia.<sup>36</sup>

The fact that Kozyrev deliberately did not include in his speech the demands made by the extreme opposition makes his motivation even more questionable.<sup>37</sup> As well as being politically naïve, there was something diplomatically suspect about criticising mainstream domestic opposition in a mock speech in an international institution. Kozyrev himself later acknowledged that the ideas he presented were 'far from being the most extreme held by Yeltsin's opponents', but explained that 'it was the attempt of Western politicians, particularly Americans, to refrain from unequivocally supporting Yeltsin's team and to look for an alternative within the so-called centrist forces in Moscow that led me to use shock techniques.'<sup>38</sup> Such a tactic brought strong reactions in Moscow. For example, Iurii Glukhov wrote in *Pravda*:

From all indications, the Minister of Foreign Affairs decided to give battle in absentia to the Congress of People's Deputies by using a forbidden method, submitting domestic problems to the judgement of the world community and, in essence, provoking outside interference and pressure...

Some people have rather unflatteringly referred to the member of the outgoing government as 'boys in pink shorts'. It seems that Mr Kozyrev has never outgrown those shorts. This time, too, he behaved like a vindictive and malicious little boy. Departing, he left a puddle behind him.

It is shameful that there has been such a minister in Russia's history.<sup>39</sup>

What really seems to have offended many people was that Kozyrev showed a very clear understanding of the views of the opposition he was attacking. Evgenii Popov in *Sovetskaia Rossiia* whole-heartedly backed the content of Kozyrev's mock speech and despaired of his subsequent renunciation:

<sup>36</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (17 December 1992a), p. 132.

<sup>37</sup> Iusin (15 December 1992).

<sup>38</sup> Kozyrev (1995a), pp. 3–4.

<sup>39</sup> Glukhov (16 December 1992). The comment reveals the widely-held perception that Kozyrev would soon be replaced.

Whereas A. Gromyko ... was nicknamed "Mr No" for his unyielding stance in defending the interests of his state, A. Kozyrev has acquired a reputation as "Mr Yes" for his servility.

Therefore, it is easy to imagine how shocked the participants in the Stockholm foreign ministers' conference were when A. Kozyrev suddenly began speaking not only with amazing good sense, but also – for the first time since he took up his ministerial post! – from the standpoint of a defender of his country's interests... However, the role of zealous fighter for Russian interests proved to be agonisingly beyond Kozyrev's ability: he immediately admitted that, without waiting for April 1, he had pulled a little practical joke on his Western colleagues, but that they had nothing to worry about, because he had been and would remain "Mr Yes"...

Kozyrev's little joke in Stockholm is not only a blasphemous insult to the Serbs, the Montenegrins and other faithful friends of ours who have been betrayed by the present Russian authorities. It is an insult to every one of us...<sup>40</sup>

These passages give an indication of the vitriolic sentiments that the hard-line opposition held towards the Foreign Minister. The red-brown coalition, of course, used the Yugoslav issue to attack Kozyrev and the government at every opportunity. In this context, Sergei Karaganov, deputy director of the Institute of Europe, noted in April 1993: 'Almost nobody is interested in Serbia here, but the opposition is playing it up to make things difficult for the administration, and the administration has to bow to that.'<sup>41</sup> But although there were political motives, the ideological links should not be ignored; not only were there some genuine pan-Slavists in Moscow, there was also a coincidence of interests and ideology between the red-brown coalition in Moscow and the Milošević government in Belgrade.

This natural solidarity was demonstrated by the continued frequency of trips to Belgrade by certain Russian deputies. The first official visit, led by Ambartsumov in April 1993, coincided with a trip by Churkin (in support of the Vance-Owen plan), who diplomatically called it a 'useful duplication' of effort.<sup>42</sup> Yet it resulted in a curious situation, since members of the parliamentary delegation issued a statement condemning Russia's tacit agreement (by abstaining rather than vetoing) to UNSCR 820 which strengthened sanctions against the FRY (see below). They also made a number of statements that were sharply critical of the official Russian policy.<sup>43</sup> These statements were welcomed by their hosts, in particular the more extreme Serb nationalists. Vojislav

<sup>40</sup> Popov (17 December 1992).

<sup>41</sup> Lukic and Lynch (1996), p. 340.

<sup>42</sup> Baturin and Gryzunov (23 April 1993).

<sup>43</sup> Rumiantsev *et al* (19 April 1993).



Šešelj, for instance, called the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs a 'staff member of the US State Department' and labelled the Russian leadership a 'fifth column'. Šešelj claimed that 'the only thing that will help us is the fall of the treacherous Yeltsin-Kozyrev leadership and the coming to power in Russia of the patriotic forces'.<sup>44</sup> Such comments by Serbian and Russian nationalists were made in the context of the political struggle in Russia, a focus for which was the referendum due to take place on 26 April (see below); after Yeltsin won the referendum, Kozyrev remarked:

I am afraid that the national patriotic forces in Belgrade, not without prompting from some of our deputies, possibly expected that similar national patriotic forces will take the upper hand in Moscow. Let's hope that the results of the referendum will have a sobering effect on them...<sup>45</sup>

## Russian diplomacy after London

After the London Conference, Russia gave full backing to the ICFY as the forum in which a 'peaceful resolution' to the conflict could be achieved, while insisting that any final decisions be made by the UNSC.<sup>46</sup> This support extended to a strong endorsement of the Vance-Owen peace plan (VOPP), although this too would have to be mandated by the UNSC and its implementation be under the political control of that body.<sup>47</sup> The other main strategy was to support the 'constructive forces' of Panić and Ćosić in the federal government. Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Boris Kolokolov was convinced that 'the leadership of the new Yugoslav republic really [was] trying to resolve the conflict in that country'.<sup>48</sup> Examples of its constructive co-operation included, according to the MFA, its agreement to long-term CSCE missions to Kosovo, Sandžak, and Vojvodina.<sup>49</sup>

On 20 December 1992, there were federal, republican, and provincial elections in the FRY, but the key election was for the Serbian presidency in which Panić and Milošević were rival candidates. As the elections approached, Russian support for Panić became increasingly outspoken. For example, on 15 December, Churkin said in an interview in *Izvestiia*:

Generalising somewhat, I would say that there are two Yugoslavias. The first is working towards exacerbating the conflict and prolonging the confrontation with

<sup>44</sup> Baturin and Gryzunov (23 April 1993).

<sup>45</sup> *Ostankino TV* (26 April 1993a).

<sup>46</sup> Gow (1997a), p. 195.

<sup>47</sup> Comments by Sergei Lavrov, *Maiak Radio* (2 February 1993).

<sup>48</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (14 September 1992).

<sup>49</sup> Russian Federation MFA (3 November 1992).

virtually the whole world community. The second advocates specific moves towards reconciliation. The presidential and parliamentary elections on 20 December will disclose this demarcation. Need it be said that Russia is wholeheartedly for this second Yugoslavia, the one that puts its stake on democracy and détente.<sup>50</sup>

And at the CSCE council of ministers meeting, the same day as Kozyrev's phoney speech, Russia and the United States issued a joint declaration in which they expressed regret at Serbia's isolation, and in this context awaited 'with great interest' the results of the elections:

Russia and the United States hope that the people of Serbia thoroughly endorse the possible alternatives. It is up to them to decide whether to return the country to the community of nations or to remain in the status of a pariah in economic and political isolation – the consequences of the policies conducted by the present regime. If the right choice is made, Russia and the US will help the Serbian government to return the country to its former position in the world arena. If a radical change of policy occurs after this election, as Russia and the US sincerely hope, then conditions will be created for easing and lifting of sanctions.<sup>51</sup>

According to a *Tanjug* report, Yeltsin even sent a message of support to Panić immediately prior to the election.<sup>52</sup>

However, Milošević's alliance won a resounding victory in the parliamentary elections, and Milošević himself was elected President of Serbia. It is possible that as well as constituting unorthodox external influence, pressure from outside may have been counter-productive. These points were made vividly by E. Popov in *Sovetskaia Rossiia*:

As for support by outside forces, it took on a downright scandalous character. Probably never before have attempts been made to exert such crude, cynical and brazen pressure on the outcome of an election in a state that is sovereign, not someone else's colony. Unfortunately, Russia's present authorities also played an active role in this arm-twisting...

There are even louder threats not only to toughen further the economic sanctions against the country that has dared to defend its independence, but also to launch air strikes against targets in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the FRY. But

<sup>50</sup> Ermolovich (15 December 1992).

<sup>51</sup> *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (18 December 1992).

<sup>52</sup> Iusin (18 December 1992).



despite that – or rather, precisely because of it! – Serbia has chosen freedom and the defence of its national dignity by voting for Slobodan Milošević.<sup>53</sup>

Bogdasarova makes a similar point regarding Russia's tactics, arguing that 'so far, being in a "besieged fortress" has helped the extremists, not the moderates'.<sup>54</sup>

Although Russian diplomats had implied that a victory by Milošević in the elections would spell an end to any hope of a less belligerent approach from the FRY, they declined to follow through the logic of these comments after the elections. Instead, the MFA preferred to think that Milošević would now become more moderate, although Panić was soon removed as federal prime minister in a vote of confidence.<sup>55</sup> Following a meeting with Milošević a week after the elections, Churkin said that he did not consider the result a 'factor blocking the settlement of the crisis in Yugoslavia' and claimed that Milošević was 'well aware that Serbia's policy of international confrontation is absolutely inadmissible and will lead the country nowhere'.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, despite the widely reported irregularities in the Yugoslav elections, in Russian eyes Milošević had been legitimated as Serbian leader.<sup>57</sup> These views are encapsulated in a comment by Kozyrev in February 1993, that the impression was being formed that Milošević was 'using his mandate received at elections in order to show support for the Vance-Owen plan', as well as there being signs of his 'positive influence' on the situation in Bosnia.<sup>58</sup> Although this might appear to be a blatant U-turn on the part of the MFA, there was some truth in the comments, since Milošević did advocate acceptance of the VOPP.

The Russian policy was now to encourage Belgrade to put pressure on Pale to accept the Vance-Owen plan, and to use the promise of easing sanctions as an incentive for it to do so. In a sense, then, the tactic remained unchanged, but the 'carrot' was now to be dangled in front of Milošević rather than Panić. Under pressure from the opposition in the Supreme Soviet, however, the MFA would not endorse a stronger 'stick'; neither stronger sanctions, nor military intervention. I shall look first at these aspects of Russian policy before examining diplomacy in relation to the Vance-Owen plan.

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<sup>53</sup> Popov (24 December 1992).

<sup>54</sup> Bogdasarova (3 January 1993). For similar arguments, see Kesic (1993); Dyker and Bojicic (21 May 1993); Palairat (27 August 1993).

<sup>55</sup> Vostrukhov (30 December 1992).

<sup>56</sup> *Interfax* (29 December 1992).

<sup>57</sup> Edemskii (1996), pp. 38-9.

<sup>58</sup> *Interfax* (12 February 1993).

## Sanctions

Russia used the promise of easing/lifting sanctions to encourage the FRY to adopt a more constructive course. It sought to ease the sanctions particularly in humanitarian areas; for example, Russia encouraged the UN sanctions committee to respond positively to Panić's requests to allow the delivery of fuel to the FRY for humanitarian purposes, a decision which Iastrzhembskii described as a positive step by the international community in support of constructive forces in the Yugoslav leadership.<sup>59</sup>

This was partly the result of domestic pressure. In resolutions, and in speeches and interviews, deputies continued to call for sanctions to be lifted, repeating previous arguments. But another aspect of the debate now became prominent: the cost for Russia of joining sanctions against the FRY. This revealed sharp divisions within the foreign policy establishment.

### The price of sanctions

As early as July 1992, the Russian trade representative in Belgrade, Valerii Ignatov, estimated that the Russian economy would suffer a loss of \$2 billion because of the severance of trade links with the FRY; the Russian car industry would suffer particularly because it would be unable to obtain spare units and components, while individual regions of the Russian Federation, primarily Western Siberia, would lose supplies of Yugoslav goods that were in chronically short supply in Russia (medicines, baby food, and so on).<sup>60</sup> Then, in September, *Interfax* reported that UN sanctions against Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Libya had deprived Russia of \$16 billion (approximately \$8 billion due to the suspension of exports and imports, and around \$8 billion from lost profits) of which \$2 billion related to Serbia and Montenegro.<sup>61</sup>

It later turned out that these figures came from the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations (MFER), which had been commissioned by the Congress of People's Deputies to do an 'audit' of losses from sanctions; the report was distributed among deputies at the seventh Congress, at Ambartsumov's request.<sup>62</sup> Committee hearings were held in which the deputy director of one of the MFER departments and one of the report's authors, I. Kofanov, confirmed that the calculations were made on a 'hypothetical basis'.<sup>63</sup> Yet, the following month, the Minister of Foreign Economic

<sup>59</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (18 December 1992) and (22 December 1992).

<sup>60</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (2 July 1992).

<sup>61</sup> *Interfax* (20 September 1992).

<sup>62</sup> Iusin (18 December 1992).

<sup>63</sup> Vinogradov (22 December 1992).



Relations, Sergei Glazev, again quoted the estimate, and claimed that appropriate documents had been prepared for closed Supreme Soviet hearings, and that Ministry experts were 'prepared to vouch for every figure they contain, including the bottom line of \$16 billion'. He argued that the international community should compensate Russia for these losses, and proposed that the problem be discussed in the UNSC.<sup>64</sup>

The MFA rebutted the claims on two levels. First, it argued that the figures in themselves were inaccurate estimates and that important facts had been neglected. Lavrov argued before the Supreme Soviet committee that although the figures might be correct, they were also 'crafty' and taken out of context.<sup>65</sup> As a representative of the MFA explained in the Supreme Soviet hearing of 21 December, the \$1.5-2 billion estimate for the cost of sanctions against the FRY 'does not take into account the real currency and export potential of the FRY in trade with us, which barely a year ago was seriously disrupted above all by the armed conflict'.<sup>66</sup> Lavrov elaborated: the main component of Russia's exports to the FRY was oil, which had in general not been delivered since the start of 1992, half a year before the sanctions were introduced; and from June 1991, there were no military supplies (the other main export) to Yugoslavia because of the arms embargo. Furthermore, Russia's debt to Yugoslavia was valued at around \$1.6 billion; therefore, even if the profit had materialised, it would have been 'eaten up' by the necessity to pay back the debt.<sup>67</sup> And Kozyrev himself claimed that 'the mythical \$16 billion does not exist, for the simple reason that all these states pay petrodollars, and in order to receive petrodollars they have to sell to the West'.<sup>68</sup> Although this appears not to apply to Yugoslavia, and there was always the possibility for barter, the fact remains that the FRY's economy would have been hit by sanctions from the West and therefore was less capable of producing exports to trade with Russia.

The second line of argument was that if Russia had not joined the sanctions regime, it would have suffered losses in other areas. A memorandum issued by the MFA put the matter starkly:

if we had not joined the sanctions, our country's actual losses would have been much greater. We would not have been able to count on Western support in the form of credits (which were around \$15 billion in 1991-2) nor on deferments of Russia's debt repayments (which saved our treasury \$18 billion this year alone), to

<sup>64</sup> Eggert (21 January 1993); *Ostankino TV* (20 January 1993).

<sup>65</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (21 December 1992), p. 146.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> *Russian Television*, 12 February 1993, quoted in Crow (19 March 1993), p. 3.

say nothing of the long-term debt restructuring that is now being discussed in Paris.<sup>69</sup>

Politically, this was an unwise admission to make. Opponents questioned the logic of such profit and loss calculations; for example, Sergei Mikhailov argued during the Supreme Soviet debate that

the majority of countries do not pay their debts... If our debts weren't rescheduled now, what could we pay? We simply have no money. They rescheduled our debts not because they love us, not because our policies are good, not because we are striving to enter the world community but because in reality we cannot pay them.<sup>70</sup>

These were valid points. The MFA seemed to be deriving its policy from instrumentalist calculations related to domestic economics, rather than addressing directly what kind of policy Russia should adopt towards the Yugoslav conflicts.

Hence, instead of defending the policy in terms of an institutionalist approach to the conflicts, the MFA laid itself open to accusations that Russia had 'sold out' Serbia and – according to the hard-line opposition – Russia's own interests, in return for short-term help from the West. Sergei Filatov's response in *Pravda* to the MFA memorandum is illustrative:

Russia cannot pursue an independent foreign policy. This deplorable fact, carefully hidden by the leadership of the MFA, has unexpectedly been documented by the spokesman for Smolensk-Sennaia Square himself. At a briefing, S. Iastrzhembskii ... in defending his ministry's position from criticism, said something that has long been clear to many people: Russia is not free in making foreign policy decisions...

Nobody will deny that our country's economic situation is such that it is extraordinarily difficult to part with that \$18 billion just now, or that the \$15 billion won't come in handy. But think about it: the West simply bought Russia's vote in the UN with the same money we will eventually be forced to return in the form of payments on our debt... Meanwhile the political gain is exceedingly dubious: Moscow lost its independence. Former friends – and others as well – now see Russia as a traitor, while new ones have been further convinced that everything on earth can be bought and sold.

Such is the true nature of the 'co-operation' with democratic countries that Mr Kozyrev so zealously propagandises. Can it really be unclear that, in response to all

<sup>69</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti* (2 December 1992).

<sup>70</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (21 December 1992), pp. 152-3.



our present and future concessions, the West is going to make us even more dependent – above all, financially?!<sup>71</sup>

As we saw in the initial debate over sanctions, Kozyrev was accused of allowing short-term financial/economic concerns to dictate Russian policy rather than calculation of Russia's strategic interests in the Balkans. The MFA's response was that these concerns were an integral part of Russia's true national interests, as was partnership with the West. However, the criticism had some force because it played on a widely-held perception that the Yeltsin administration would do anything to maintain that 'partnership', resulting in a very unequal partnership indeed. The vulnerability of the MFA's position contributed to a shift in emphasis aimed at demonstrating Russia's independence. Unfortunately, if the original policy was shaped in part by factors outside the immediate Balkans context – in an instrumental manner – then the new approach, concerned with Russia's prestige, was also not derived from the situation in the conflicts themselves. It was therefore no more conducive to a just resolution of the conflicts.

## **Resolution 820**

The UNSC did not discuss the easing of sanctions against the FRY as the Russian Supreme Soviet demanded. Instead, it discussed a draft resolution to impose stricter measures. This was intended to give an additional incentive to Milošević to put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to sign all aspects of the Vance-Owen peace plan.

The Security Council vote was due to occur on 12 April. But Russian diplomats wanted it to be delayed, ostensibly to give the Yugoslav leadership more time to influence Pale. According to Kozyrev, the adoption of the resolution would have been 'untimely':

today Russia will again prevent the corresponding resolution being adopted in the UNSC so that the sides in the conflict are given the opportunity, with the help of international mediation, to reach a compromise on the basis of the Vance-Owen plan.<sup>72</sup>

But it was also suspected that the Russian administration did not want the Security Council resolution to affect the result of the referendum called by Yeltsin for 25 April (which was in effect a national vote of confidence in his presidency).<sup>73</sup> Such linkage

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<sup>71</sup> Filatov (4 December 1992).

<sup>72</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (12 April 1993).

<sup>73</sup> Lukic and Lynch (1996), p. 344.

was denied by the MFA; Iastrzhembskii, for example, said that the accusation was 'groundless ... a completely artificial deduction'.<sup>74</sup>

Whatever the motive it seemed that Russia would veto the resolution. Since no veto had been cast since 1990, and it had now become the norm for consensus to be reached before putting resolutions to the vote, proponents of the new sanctions – the United States, France, and Britain – agreed to postpone the vote until 26 April.<sup>75</sup>

However, fighting around Srebrenica led to fears that the Serb forces were going to capture one of the last non-Serb enclaves in the Drina valley.<sup>76</sup> In response, the UNSC vote was brought forward to 17 April. If Russia's objection was that a vote on sanctions at that stage would be 'untimely' with regard to the peace process, then it might have been expected to vote against the resolution.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, after the vote, Churkin made no attempt to conceal Moscow's coolness toward the resolution and described it as an ill-timed decision that could only harden the Serbs' position and make dialogue more difficult.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, he did not believe that the initiators of the vote had 'fully observed the agreement to postpone the vote until 26 April'.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, Russia abstained and UNSCR 820 was passed. In it, the UNSC denounced the Bosnian Serb refusal to endorse the VOPP and decided to tighten sanctions on the FRY.<sup>80</sup> These new sanctions would go into effect after nine days, on 26 April;<sup>81</sup> this gave the FRY leadership time to exert further pressure on the Bosnian Serb leadership to accept the plan and thus avert the imposition of the new sanctions.

Russia chose to abstain, rather than veto the resolution, for two reasons. Firstly, Churkin explained, Russia had already twice succeeded in postponing the vote on the understanding that it would not veto the resolution when it came to a vote.<sup>82</sup> More importantly, Russian diplomats did not want an open split with Western powers. This was partly because of the need for international unity in these crucial weeks for the Vance-Owen plan, but also because Russian policy makers still believed in a broad partnership with the West. For example, in response to a question from a Belgrade journalist at a press conference, Churkin argued: 'You should entertain no illusions.

<sup>74</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (14 April 1993).

<sup>75</sup> *Shal'nev* (14 April 1993).

<sup>76</sup> *Watson and Ware* (28 April 1993), p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> *Arbatova* (1997a), p. 471.

<sup>78</sup> *Iusin* (21 April 1993); *Ostankino TV* (18 April 1993).

<sup>79</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (19 April 1993a).

<sup>80</sup> They were very severe measures, stopping transit of goods across the FRY, and freezing all financial assets, effectively turning it into a blockade; *Gow* (1997a), p. 246; *Owen* (1996), p. 145.

<sup>81</sup> Thus the new sanctions applied after the Russian referendum, but the vote occurred before it (it had no significant discernible impact on the referendum vote which gave Yeltsin the mandate he wanted).

<sup>82</sup> *Arbatova* (1997a), p. 471.



Russia has its own foreign-policy priorities. We will never get into confrontation with the world community over the map of Bosnia.’<sup>83</sup>

This illustrates the compromise nature of Russia’s policy during this transitional phase, when the MFA tried to be independent and show a ‘balanced’ approach but also continued to promote close relations with the West. Russia was prepared to allow the international community’s frustrations with Serbia to be expressed through sanctions rather than through military action; as Churkin put it, ‘economic sanctions do not mean the end of the world’ for the FRY.<sup>84</sup> In any case, as Kozyrev explained two days after the Security Council vote, Russia did not object to tougher sanctions against the FRY, but simply believed that they should be implemented after 26 April in order to give the Serb side more time to come to the correct decision.<sup>85</sup>

The domestic constraints on policy were shown by the way that the Russian attitude towards the new sanctions appeared to change dramatically on 25 April. Kozyrev stated that Russia would support sanctions because the Bosnian Serbs seemed to have made their choice in support of war by rejecting even in principle the Vance-Owen plan. In a much quoted phrase, he said that he felt ‘sick at heart’ over the fact that Russia had abstained in the UNSC vote: ‘This decision was probably correct in principle, but in the future we must vote not with the national-patriots, but with those who support a civilised solution to issues.’<sup>86</sup> After the referendum, the administration’s policy became more hard-line towards the Bosnian Serbs, indicating in part that the previous policy had been a compromise due to domestic pressure.

The problem with this zig-zag policy was that the administration did not set out a clear position and defend it in the face of opposition, but conceded when it felt necessary and then retracted the concession when it felt stronger. Given, for instance, Churkin’s comments after the UNSC vote that increased sanctions would provoke the Bosnian Serbs to be more recalcitrant, when they were indeed so, a more consistent position would have been to say, ‘we told you so!’ Instead, Kozyrev repudiated the MFA’s previous position; asked what he thought of the Bosnian Serbs’ refusal to accept the Vance-Owen plan, he replied:

The outcome of the vote in the Bosnian Serbs’ parliament confirmed the worst fears. By way of self-criticism, I want to say that our tactic of delaying the adoption of a resolution toughening sanctions against Yugoslavia proved to be

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<sup>83</sup> Iusin (21 April 1993).

<sup>84</sup> Arbatova (1997a), p. 472.

<sup>85</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (19 April 1993b).

<sup>86</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (25 April 1993).

insufficiently effective. The Bosnian Serb leadership and the national-patriotic forces in Belgrade had no intention of using the three-month delay we had secured to hold serious negotiations.<sup>87</sup>

Perhaps his honesty is laudable, but this admission, in the light of previous categorical warnings about the effect of the sanctions vote, reveals a clearly inadequate and inconsistent approach. If what he now said was correct – which it probably was – why had it taken him so long to realise it?

Certainly, the result of the Russian referendum gave Kozyrev the confidence to return to a position closer to that of Russia's Western 'partners'; asked about how the referendum outcome would be reflected in Russian foreign policy, he stated that 'in supporting the President, the voters also endorsed his foreign policy course. This should lend confidence to our actions in the international arena'.<sup>88</sup>

## **Military factors**

### **The arms embargo**

Russia opposed lifting the arms embargo, believing that it should be as strictly enforced as economic sanctions against the FRY.<sup>89</sup> Like their British and French counterparts, Russian diplomats believed that lifting the embargo would escalate the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina itself and heighten the danger of the conflict spreading. As Kozyrev put it, 'such a decision would lead to a new round of confrontation... We would in effect be acknowledging that the conflict can be resolved only by military means'.<sup>90</sup> European governments, including Russia, warned that lifting the embargo might turn the war into a great power proxy conflict if, for example, Russia armed the Serbs, and the United States armed the Bosnian government forces.<sup>91</sup> Such warnings served the purpose of averting American demands for the embargo to be lifted, which neither Russia nor Western European powers wanted. However, the underlying assumption behind them was that Russia was a natural ally of the Serbs.

### **Peace enforcement/peace-making**

From 1993, Russia was opposed to any direct military intervention by the 'international community' in order to impose a settlement or to support one of the conflicting sides;

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<sup>87</sup> Iusin (29 April 1993).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (22 December 1992).

<sup>90</sup> Iusin (29 April 1993).

<sup>91</sup> Oznobistchev (1994).



policy makers frequently re-iterated their commitment to what they termed 'political methods' of conflict resolution. The MFA was fully aware that if it did not veto any UNSC resolution about the use of force, the domestic outcry would be stronger even than that which followed the sanctions vote the previous May. But it also resisted intervention because of the role that NATO would play in any enforcement action.

The MFA, the Defence Ministry, and the parliamentary centrists and opposition all shared concerns regarding the role of NATO in any international military action, and it was this above all else that determined their intention to prevent it. It is not surprising, for example, to find Ambartsumov in December 1992 objecting to NATO action – the possibility of which was mooted at the North Atlantic Council meeting that month – because it would not lead to a positive resolution of the conflict and did not 'correspond with Russia's national-state interests'.<sup>92</sup> This gradually became the policy of the MFA, with the full backing of the Defence Ministry, particularly as NATO expansion became a real possibility.

Peace enforcement action in Bosnia would provide NATO with a *raison d'être*, a fact that many Russians believed was a primary motivation for NATO taking the lead.<sup>93</sup> It would also mean that Russia would be excluded from decision making. Russia preferred to see international organisations of which it was a member take responsibility for peace-keeping/peace-enforcement, that is the UN or the CSCE. But since neither of these had the capability to mount an intervention, then there should be no intervention. Enforcement action might also set a precedent for UN or NATO involvement in the former Soviet Union. One aspect of Russia's more assertive foreign policy was the aim of establishing exclusive influence in the 'near abroad'. It was therefore considered important that no military action, particularly by NATO, be carried out in conditions analogous to those pertaining in many regions of the former Soviet Union.

Yet, Russian policy-makers were never prepared to come to an implicit agreement on spheres of influence whereby NATO would recognise the 'near abroad' as Russia's zone, and Russia would recognise the Balkans as NATO's zone (its 'near abroad'). The Yugoslav conflict was too important an opportunity for Russia to demonstrate its great power credentials; moreover, such an agreement would provide NATO with a renewed role and encourage it to expand into other areas of Central and Eastern Europe; and it would never be acceptable domestically for the Russian government to 'abandon' a region that historically had been significant to Russia.

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<sup>92</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (22 December 1992), p. 157.

<sup>93</sup> See Baev (1996a), p. 76; and Baev (1996b), p. 159.



## Peace-keeping

Concerns over NATO's role also extended to the issue of peace-keeping in former Yugoslavia, although somewhat contradictory conclusions were drawn by different institutions and individuals. The MFA continued to support UNPROFOR and proposed that Russia extend its contribution, perhaps offering troops to serve in Bosnia-Herzegovina in addition to those already stationed in Sector East in Croatia. This was envisaged particularly in the context of the large scale operation to implement the Vance-Owen plan and was designed partly to prevent this from becoming a NATO-dominated operation. For instance, speaking at a joint meeting of the Russian Foreign and Defence ministries, Kozyrev claimed that there was widespread enthusiasm for Russian involvement in any peace-keeping operation and that it would be wrong for NATO to have to organise the entire project.<sup>94</sup>

But the Defence Ministry and the military continued to take a somewhat different stance. In late 1992, the Russian General Staff opposed MFA proposals to increase Russia's contribution to UNPROFOR since it was already faced with a deficit of élite forces as a result of involvement in at least three large scale peace-keeping missions (Transdnestr, South Ossetia, and Abkhazia).<sup>95</sup> While the Vance-Owen plan was under consideration, Grachev told the NATO meeting of Defence Ministers that Russian forces were already 'overworked' in the peace-keeping operations in the former Soviet Union.<sup>96</sup> Yet, the Defence Ministry considered the Balkans to be a sphere of interest for Russia. This meant that it was unwilling to leave the peace-keeping task exclusively to Western powers. This reveals a mismatch between Russian great power aspirations and great power capability, the result of which was obstruction of effective action by Western powers. Such reasoning was shown, for example, when the United States sent 300 peace-keepers to Macedonia as a preventative measure. Belgrade media reported that the Russian ambassador to the FRY had visited Skopje in a failed attempt to persuade the Macedonians to reject the US offer; this was interpreted by some commentators as a result of the unwillingness of Russia's Defence Ministry not only to participate in peace-keeping efforts in the Balkans, but also to allow an expanded American presence in the area.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *Interfax* (6 May 1993).

<sup>95</sup> Baev (1994a), p. 44.

<sup>96</sup> Tsekhmistrenko *et al* (2 April 1993).

<sup>97</sup> Gryzunov and Baturin (23 June 1993). Gryzunov and Baturin viewed as a 'pretext' the argument that the American troops had been stationed in Macedonia to prevent the conflict from spreading; they quote Dušan Simić, director of the Belgrade Institute of International Politics and Economics, who believed that the move enabled Washington to 'drive a wedge' into the sphere of interests of the three main forces in



In fact, one of the concerns of the Defence Ministry and the General Staff was the vulnerability of peace-keepers in former Yugoslavia; for instance, in January, they expressed alarm at the threat the Croat offensive posed to the Russian battalion (RUSSBAT) in Sector East.<sup>98</sup> There were also cases reported in the Russian media of casualties among UNPROFOR troops in Bosnia – particularly from the Ukrainian contingent deployed in Sarajevo – which did little to encourage the Russian military to offer troops to serve there. Strict rules of engagement applied in former Yugoslavia; troops could act only in clear cases of self-defence and in line with the principle of proportionate response. This was a further disincentive for the Russian Defence Ministry to deploy troops that were accustomed to operating with more flexibility in the former Soviet Union.<sup>99</sup> Of course, Russia itself had insisted on such rules to prevent a creeping intervention by NATO against the Bosnian and Krajina Serbs; but those rules were a further reason for the Russian military not to be involved, and therefore increased the danger of a NATO monopoly. The Defence Ministry thus appeared to be in a vicious circle; but its preferred exit was for no major peace-keeping or peace enforcement operation to be deployed in former Yugoslavia without the complete support of all sides. This was in contrast to its policy in the ‘near abroad’ where it favoured resolute, often partial intervention by Russia/the CIS in ethnic conflicts.

Had the Bosnian Serbs signed the Vance-Owen plan, it is almost certain that the MFA would have prevailed and that Russian troops would have participated in the implementation force. Churkin stated why: ‘The question is about the need to confirm our role as a great state. If we want our voice to resound loudly in the Balkans, we simply cannot afford to shun this participation.’<sup>100</sup> This remained the MFA’s position throughout the conflict. For instance, in the context of the Geneva conference later in 1993, Kozyrev argued:

If the Geneva talks are successful ... the scale of the peace-keeping operations in Bosnia and Herzegovina will drastically increase. And, I think, if Russia wants to retain its role as one of the leading forces in the Bosnian settlement and in the

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the Balkans: Islamic, Russian, and European (German). For such promulgators of crude realism and the ‘clash of civilisations’ – in Serbia and in Russia – no action by Western powers in the Balkans could be performed from the simple motive of trying to limit or end the war.

<sup>98</sup> Speech by Vorontsov in UNSC, *ITAR-TASS* (26 January 1993); in fact, by January 1994, two servicemen of RUSSBAT had been killed and nineteen wounded; *Radio Moscow International* (6 January 1994).

<sup>99</sup> In relation to Russia’s peace-keeping missions in the former Soviet Union, Baev writes that ‘[t]he Russian military leadership in particular sees the Bosnian example, where permission must be obtained for every air strike from various military and political authorities, as absolutely unacceptable’; Baev (1996a), p. 77.

<sup>100</sup> Pushkov (21 March 1993).



Balkans as a whole, this role must also be reinforced by real involvement in this operation.<sup>101</sup>

And when a peace deal was finally signed, Russia did participate, despite the fact that IFOR was a 'NATO-led' force (chapter 8).

### **Use of force by UNPROFOR and NATO**

In certain clearly defined circumstances, Russia allowed the use of force to protect UNPROFOR troops and to enforce UNSC resolutions, as long as it was limited and impartial. In August 1992, Russia was a co-author of UNSCR 770, which called upon states to 'take nationally or through regional agencies or arrangements all measures necessary' to ensure the delivery of relief supplies in Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, spokesman Aleksandr Rozanov stated that the resolution allowed the use of force only 'against a concrete violator impeding the deliveries of aid'.<sup>102</sup> This interpretation was reinforced by British diplomats who also made it clear that the resolution legitimised the use of force only in self-defence by troops protecting convoys and did not allow force to be used to ensure the delivery of aid if obstructed by local militias.<sup>103</sup>

Similarly, Russia voted in October 1992 for UNSCR 781, which established the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, Kozyrev – fearing domestic criticism of another 'anti-Serb' resolution – repeatedly emphasised that the ban was aimed against all the warring parties and should not be regarded as anti-Serb.<sup>104</sup> Despite objections from Grachev,<sup>105</sup> the MFA later accepted active enforcement of the zone by NATO as long as any military action was approved first by the UN (the 'dual key' mechanism).<sup>106</sup> Hence, Russia voted on 31 March 1993 for UNSCR 816 which – after more than 400 recorded violations of UNSCR 781, mainly by Serb aircraft – authorised member states to 'take all necessary measures' to ensure compliance with the flight ban. The MFA did, however, get the vote postponed three times, until after the ninth Congress of People's Deputies, and also achieved significant changes to the text to mitigate the effects on the Serbs. Mention of the possibility of strikes against ground targets was deleted (only the Serb side had aviation bases on the ground), and – at Moscow's insistence – the resolution stated explicitly that force could be used only over the territory of Bosnia-

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<sup>101</sup> Kozyrev (1 September 1993).

<sup>102</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (13 August 1992).

<sup>103</sup> Gow (1997a), pp. 111-12.

<sup>104</sup> Iusin (19 January 1993); *ITAR-TASS* (1 February 1993).

<sup>105</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (1 April 1993).

<sup>106</sup> Bowker (1998), p. 1250.



Herzegovina (it had seemed likely that NATO would carry out air strikes against targets in Serbia itself).<sup>107</sup>

Thirdly, Russia allowed the use of force in response to attacks on UNPROFOR, but only in self-defence, that is under traditional UN peace-keeping rules of engagement.

### **Opposition opinion**

The nationalist and communist opposition and press in Russia were, of course, outspoken in their suspicion of anything that might lead to military intervention. In December 1992, *Pravda* published an appeal by eight scholars – including Gus'kova, Volobuev, Volkov, Tiagunenkov – to the CPD in which they wrote that

one does not have to be a profound analyst to realise that behind the new toughening of sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro are certain forces that are seeking ... to pave the way for a decisive step – military interference, which in all probability would be direct intervention in Yugoslavia by NATO under the specious excuse of peace-keeping.<sup>108</sup>

And Vladimir Peresada wrote that UNSCR 816 gave the pretext which NATO had been lacking to enforce the flight ban: 'in this way the Western bloc is starting on the path of direct armed intervention in the Yugoslav crisis'.<sup>109</sup>

Warnings by Russian nationalists of the consequences of military intervention became increasingly vivid as the question of enforcement of the Vance-Owen peace plan came to the fore. Nikolai Pavlov, for instance, read a statement from the National Salvation Front warning that in the event of war being waged against Yugoslavia, popular indignation in Russia could take 'unpredictable forms':

We must warn that the spontaneous indignation of Russia's citizens is able to create a threat to the security of the US and Western subjects staying on the territory of the Russian Federation after the beginning of aggression waged by the forces of the New World Order.<sup>110</sup>

### **Russian Diplomacy in 1993**

Russian diplomacy in relation to the Yugoslav conflicts became more distinctive and high profile in early 1993. This, as we have seen, was partly in response to criticism

<sup>107</sup> Iusin (2 April 1993); Watson and Ware (28 April 1993), pp. 2-3; Tsekhmistrenko *et al* (2 April 1993).

<sup>108</sup> *Pravda* (2 December 1992).

<sup>109</sup> Peresada (6 April 1993).

<sup>110</sup> *Interfax* (27 April 1993). Churkin described this as an 'open and cynical appeal to blatantly terrorist action against diplomatic personnel'; Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (28 April 1993), p. 198.

from the CPD and the Supreme Soviet; but it was also a reaction to a perceived tendency on the part of Western diplomats to ignore Russia. For example, in the context of Iraq and Yugoslavia, Yeltsin stated at a press conference on 25 January that the United States had a 'tendency to dictate terms' instead of engaging in dialogue.<sup>111</sup> Russian diplomats claimed in response to this tendency that their appraisal of the situation in Yugoslavia was – in Kozyrev's words – 'more competent' than that of the West.<sup>112</sup>

At the beginning of 1993, Russia embarked on a 'diplomatic offensive' in former Yugoslavia, taking advantage of the pause in US actions due to the change of administration.<sup>113</sup> This included the announcement of an eight-point plan for the resolution of the conflict, which called for: a cease-fire during negotiations; the end of military actions in Croatia (with possible sanctions if the offensive continued); adoption of the Vance-Owen peace plan backed by a UNSC resolution; gradual lifting of sanctions against the FRY after the Serb side had signed the peace plan; the creation of UN multi-national forces to facilitate implementation of the plan, with possible Russian participation, and the involvement of the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (in accordance with Chapter VIII – on regional organisations – of the UN Charter); tightened control of the arms embargo; the creation of a UN international tribunal to investigate war crimes in the former Yugoslavia; and the elaboration of guarantees of human rights in Bosnia-Herzegovina.<sup>114</sup> One commentator greeted this plan as an indication that Russian diplomacy had advantages over that of the US in particular, claiming that it contained fuller proposals than Clinton's own six-point plan, and was more comprehensive, going beyond the Bosnian war to cover all-Balkan stabilisation.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, the eight-point plan was really a re-statement of Russia's position: its backing of UN-sponsored proposals and, above all, the Vance-Owen peace plan.

### **The Vance-Owen plan**

According to the 1991 census, Bosnia-Herzegovina had the following ethnic composition: 43.7 per cent Muslims, 31.4 per cent Serbs, 17.3 per cent Croats, 5.5 per cent Yugoslavs, 2.1 per cent other.<sup>116</sup> Areas of majority of each of the groups were

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<sup>111</sup> Glukhov (27 January 1993).

<sup>112</sup> Tsekhmistrenko and Edemskii (12 February 1993).

<sup>113</sup> Tsekhmistrenko and Edemskii (4 February 1993).

<sup>114</sup> *Maiak Radio* (24 February 1993).

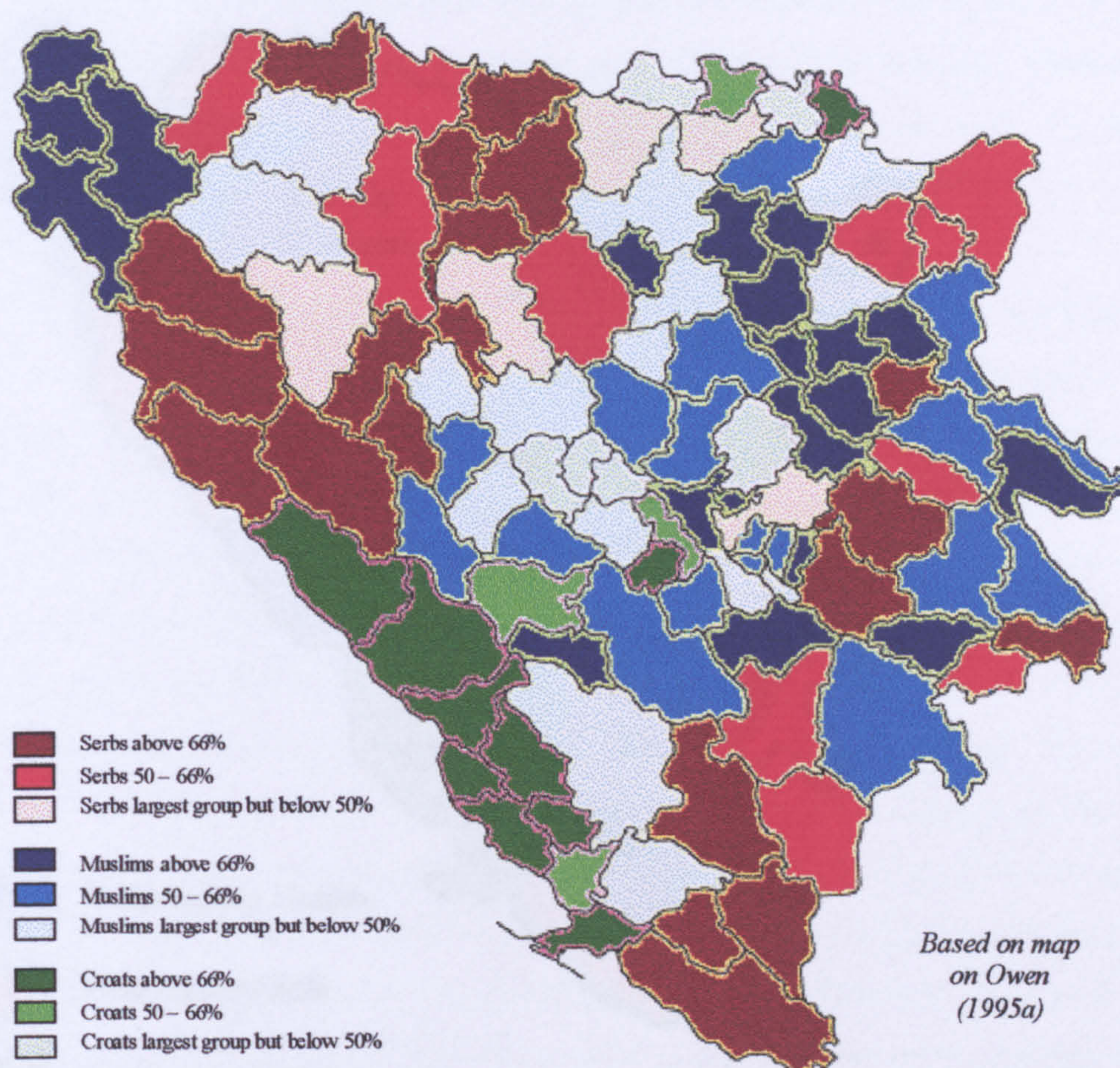
<sup>115</sup> Edemskii (16 February 1993).

<sup>116</sup> Woodward (1995), p. 33.



disjointed (see map 3). A large proportion of towns and villages were ethnically mixed. There was also a high percentage of mixed marriages (27 per cent).<sup>117</sup>

**Map 3** Ethnic composition of Bosnia-Herzegovina by opština according to 1991 census



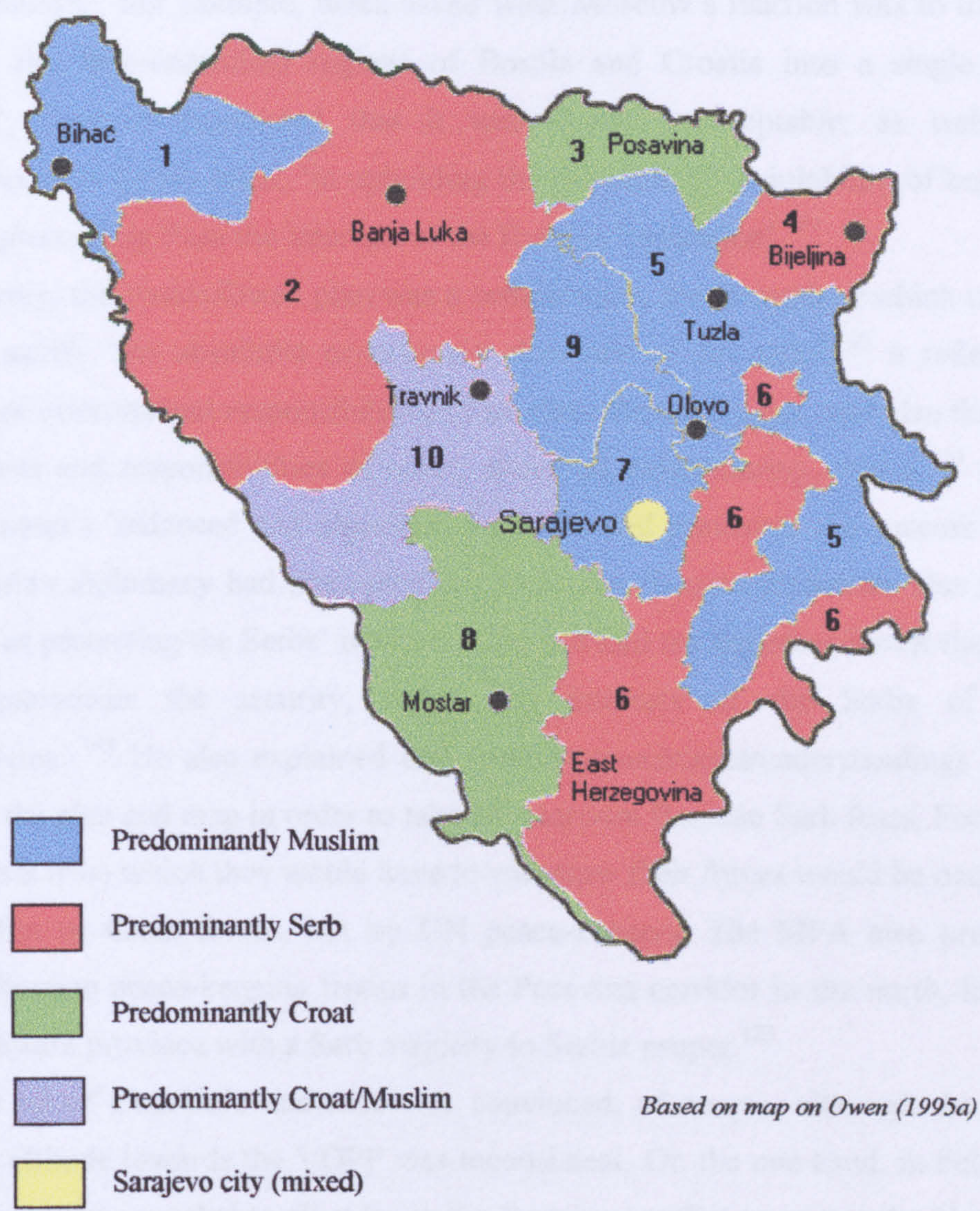
The Vance-Owen peace plan would have maintained Bosnia-Herzegovina's unity, but devolved significant powers to ten provinces. Four of these provinces would have a Muslim majority, three a Serb majority, and two a Croat majority. Province 10 would be predominantly Croat and Muslim. Sarajevo region would be mixed. The plan was criticised by many analysts in the West, and by members of the Clinton administration, primarily because the provinces were based on ethnic criteria and hence seemed to recognise the results of 'ethnic cleansing' and the division of the country into ethnic sub-states. Nevertheless, refugees were supposed to return and thus 'ethnic cleansing' would be reversed, and decentralisation was the most realistic compromise to prevent

<sup>117</sup> Anzulovic (1999), p. 138.



the division of the country. The provinces were also distributed in such a way that it was difficult for an ethnic group to join ‘its’ provinces to create a contiguous region (see map 4).

Map 4 Vance-Owen plan, spring 1993



Russia’s support for the VOPP derived from several factors. The plan appeared to provide a basis for a settlement that upheld the London Conference principles and its acceptance would avert any Western demands for outside military intervention in the conflict. It also served Russia’s own interests and strategic goals as understood by the Yeltsin administration.



Firstly, the Vance-Owen plan would be endorsed by the Security Council and be implemented by UN forces; although NATO would be involved, its actions would be subservient to the UN Secretary-General and the UNSC.<sup>118</sup>

Secondly, the MFA supported the maintenance of Bosnia-Herzegovina's territorial integrity. This partly resulted from an interpretation of Russia's interests in terms of 'mirror factors'. For example, when asked what Moscow's reaction was to the idea of merging the Serb-controlled regions of Bosnia and Croatia into a single 'Serbian republic', Kozyrev responded that it was totally unacceptable; as well as the implications for Serbia itself, 'in upholding the principle of inviolability of borders, we are also proceeding from the interests of the Russian Federation'.<sup>119</sup>

Thirdly, the Vance-Owen plan was a compromise, the strength of which was that it did not satisfy 'the absolutist or extremist demands of any side';<sup>120</sup> it reflected 'the balance of interests and responsibilities of all three Bosnian sides, and also the balance of interests and responsibilities of other, above all neighbouring, states'.<sup>121</sup> Hence, it suited Russia's 'balanced and objective' approach and prevented the success of forces that Russian diplomacy had attempted to check. But Russian diplomats also portrayed the plan as protecting the Serbs' interests. Churkin told the Supreme Soviet that the deal 'fully guarantees the security, rights and interests of the Serbs of Bosnia-Herzegovina'.<sup>122</sup> He also explained that certain amendments/understandings had been made to the plan and map in order to take into account Bosnian Serb fears. For instance, those areas from which they would have to withdraw their forces would be occupied not by Muslim or Croat forces, but by UN peace-keepers. The MFA also promised to deploy Russian peace-keeping troops in the Posavina corridor in the north, linking the north-western province with a Serb majority to Serbia proper.<sup>123</sup>

Not all of Churkin's audience was convinced, of course, although the Supreme Soviet's attitude towards the VOPP was inconsistent. On the one hand, in February the Supreme Soviet appealed to all sides in the Bosnian conflict to accept the Vance-Owen plan.<sup>124</sup> Ambartsumov reinforced the MFA's efforts to persuade Karadžić to sign, holding a telephone conversation with him to that end in April. But the 'intransigent opposition' opposed adoption of the plan because it 'damaged the interests of the

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<sup>118</sup> Pushkov (21 March 1993).

<sup>119</sup> Iusin (29 April 1993).

<sup>120</sup> *Russia TV* (28 April 1993).

<sup>121</sup> *Maiak Radio* (24 February 1993).

<sup>122</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (28 April 1993), p. 188.

<sup>123</sup> Iusin (21 April 1993).

<sup>124</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (18 February 1993b).



Bosnian Serbs'.<sup>125</sup> A group of deputies of a 'certain tendency' invited Karadžić for an unofficial visit to Moscow in mid-April, which Iastrzhembskii described as 'untimely', sending out the wrong signal at an 'intricate and difficult moment'.<sup>126</sup> Most significantly, the Supreme Soviet rejected the clause of a draft resolution of 27 April urging political and military leaders of the Bosnian Serbs to adopt the plan, with necessary adjustments, as proposed in an appeal by the presidents of Serbia, Montenegro, and the FRY.<sup>127</sup> Churkin regretted that by failing to endorse the presidents' appeal, the Supreme Soviet had 'lost an opportunity to bring a weighty contribution to international efforts of crisis settlement'.<sup>128</sup>

Opposition to the plan was not confined to the 'red-brown' alliance. Rumiantsev (usually more anti-Western than Ambartsumov), for instance, expressed realist objections: claiming that Lord Owen had rejected an agreement made between Croats and Serbs over the Posavina corridor (province 3 on the map), he argued that 'the sides themselves can carry out amendments to the map, if there is no coarse pressure from outside, coarse pressure, behind which lie large-scale geopolitical interests'.<sup>129</sup> His own position was clear: Russia should back the Serbs in the same way that the Muslim world was helping the Muslim side by, for example, financing arms supplies to Bosnia:

To whom are the Serbs looking? If you go to any town in Serbia today, to any village in Serbia, regardless of whether you are a democrat, a patriot, a communist or a centrist, they will always say to you: "Russians, you are our real hope".

We have lost too many allies in recent times. And this nation is our ally. Not the regime, not specific political forces, but this nation is our ally. To forget this is simply a crime today...<sup>130</sup>

Regardless, the MFA continued to push for acceptance of the Vance-Owen plan, by appeals, promises, and threats. Churkin made several visits to Belgrade to exert pressure on the FRY leadership and the Bosnian Serbs, although without success.<sup>131</sup> As the eight-point plan showed, Russia promised to bring a vote in the UNSC to ease sanctions if the Serbs signed the Vance-Owen plan. But Russian diplomats also used threats, particularly after the Russian referendum, and when the Bosnian Serbs appeared to have rejected the VOPP. Yeltsin, for example, warned that Russia would 'not protect those

<sup>125</sup> Tsekhmistrenko *et al* (2 April 1993).

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (29 April 1993).

<sup>128</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (30 April 1993).

<sup>129</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (28 April 1993), p. 212.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>131</sup> Edemskii (6 April 1993) and (8 April 1993).



who set themselves in opposition to the world community' and hoped that the Bosnian Serb referendum would come up with a 'more carefully considered decision' than the Bosnian Serb assembly had in rejecting the plan.<sup>132</sup> Yeltsin issued a further statement on 6 May, warning that although Russia would 'extend firm support to all those who will honestly follow the path of peace on the basis of the Vance-Owen plan', it would not 'back anyone who would seek to avoid it'.<sup>133</sup> These statements reinforced the message that Russia would not sacrifice relations with the West for the sake of the Bosnian Serbs or the 'national patriotic forces in Belgrade'. As Kozyrev put it after the Russian referendum, 'it will be a great political error to count on Russia pulling the chestnuts out of the fire for the forces it rejects internally', i.e. the 'national patriots' in Moscow.<sup>134</sup>

At this stage, Russian diplomats did not rule out *explicitly* the use of force to compel acceptance of the VOPP, hoping that their ambiguous stance would have a positive impact. Hence, when Rumiantsev asked Churkin directly how the Russian representative on the UNSC would vote if the question of military intervention arose, Churkin refused to be drawn, leaving the matter open in order to increase the pressure on the Serbs:

if the Serbs undertake this or that criminal action in Bosnia, then inevitably and immediately the question will arise in the Security Council about the necessity to use some form of vigorous measures in relation to the situation. We have made this absolutely clear to the Serbs...

But as to how we would vote in this situation ... I am not now authorised (I have no instruction, and, as far as I know, no such decision has been taken) to tell you, how exactly we will act in this situation ... a lot depends on what the situation really is at that time.<sup>135</sup>

This did not satisfy the Supreme Soviet which then adopted a resolution stating that the government must consider it obligatory for the representative of the Russian Federation in the Security Council to use the right of veto in a vote on possible military intervention of international forces in the Yugoslav crisis, because 'such actions affect vitally important interests of the Russian Federation and will not lead to a resolution of the crisis'.<sup>136</sup>

<sup>132</sup> *Interfax* (28 April 1993); *ITAR-TASS* (27 April 1993).

<sup>133</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (6 May 1993).

<sup>134</sup> *Ostankino TV* (26 April 1993a).

<sup>135</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (28 April 1993), pp. 193-4.

<sup>136</sup> Russian Federation Supreme Soviet (29 April 1993).



## **Progressive implementation, the 'Joint Action Programme', and the demise of the VOPP**

The Russian administration was unwilling to abandon the VOPP even after the Bosnian Serbs had rejected it in their referendum. Like their Western European counterparts, Russian policy makers regarded the plan as the best basis for a just and lasting peace as well as a focus for international accord. On 16 May, after talks with David Owen and Thorvald Stoltenberg (who had replaced Vance as the UN negotiator), Kozyrev argued that it was 'now essential, disregarding the obstructionist position of those forces interested in war, to begin strict implementation of the provisions of the Vance-Owen plan'.<sup>137</sup> He believed that the international community 'did not have to wait until the last Bosnian fighter endorses the plan' and that it could 'put out the fire in former Yugoslavia step by step'.<sup>138</sup> Hence, Kozyrev and Yeltsin proposed 'progressive implementation' of the plan, and called for a meeting of the UNSC at foreign minister level to adopt a resolution drafted by Russia.<sup>139</sup>

The idea was to apply the VOPP in areas controlled by Bosnian government and Croat forces, without waiting for acceptance by the Bosnian Serbs. Russia would join the US and European states in providing peace-keepers, although the question of numbers of the Russian contingent could only be tackled after the UNSC had adopted the plan and devised a mechanism for implementing it.<sup>140</sup> The problem was that, as we have seen, the Russian MFA would have found it extremely difficult to convince the Defence Ministry and the General Staff to commit significant numbers of troops to a continuing conflict situation outside the former Soviet space.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, since one side had rejected the VOPP, ultimately the plan could be enforced only by coercion, even if implementation was progressive. But Russia was very unlikely to endorse coercive action, even though the MFA fully supported the London Conference principles and the VOPP, and was itself proposing progressive implementation. In other words, the MFA was unlikely to follow through the logic of its own proposal. This was because of the likely political impact. It was also due to scepticism from the Defence Ministry and the armed forces which were unwilling to take part in a peace enforcement operation but refused to countenance an action in which they were not involved.

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<sup>137</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (16 May 1993).

<sup>138</sup> Gow (1997a), p. 249.

<sup>139</sup> Ermolovich (18 May 1993); and *ITAR-TASS* (17 May 1993).

<sup>140</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (19 May 1993).

<sup>141</sup> A fact admitted by Churkin, *Serbian TV* (29 June 1993).



The Clinton administration did not support 'progressive implementation' because it did not favour the VOPP and would not commit troops without a comprehensive peace settlement. The American Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, refused to attend the planned ministerial meeting of the Security Council on 21 May; instead, Foreign Ministers of the four European UNSC members – Russia, France, the United Kingdom, and Spain – met Christopher in Washington and drew up the so-called Joint Action Programme. This was a means of overcoming differences between the great powers over further responses to the continuing conflict. The result was a compromise that did little to promote an effective settlement. Although it supposed the achievement of a peace settlement through negotiations based on the VOPP, the Joint Action Programme marked a shift to concentration on the 'safe area' concept. This was to prove disastrous.

Kozyrev continued to portray the Joint Action Programme as a means of salvaging the VOPP; for instance, on the flight back from Washington, he told journalists that 'urgent measures' had been necessary to prevent the VOPP being derailed, but that it had undoubtedly been saved.<sup>142</sup> A seven-point 'Russian plan number two' called for full respect for the experience, ideas, and principles of the London Conference, the Vance-Owen plan and the Washington Joint Action Programme. But soon Churkin was admitting that the Geneva negotiators had 'deviated a little' from the VOPP and were instead considering a three-way federation ('a unified Bosnian state consisting of three national entities – Serbian, Muslim and Croatian'), which Yeltsin described as 'probably the most viable idea'.<sup>143</sup> On 31 July, Kozyrev issued a statement announcing an 'important result' at the Geneva talks, an agreement between the parties to create the United Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina in which the constitutional framework for the co-existence of the three peoples had been defined.<sup>144</sup> An MFA declaration in August stated, like previous declarations, that the principles of the London Conference, the Washington Programme, as well as UN documents, provided the world community with a good basis for further activity in the Bosnian process; but there was no mention of the VOPP.<sup>145</sup>

Failure to enforce the VOPP was an admission that the 'international community' did not have the unity of purpose to reverse 'ethnic cleansing' and Serb territorial gains in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This implied tacit acknowledgement that the Bosnian Serbs would achieve their constitutional purposes, if not their territorial ambitions. Hence, all

<sup>142</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (24 May 1993); *Maiak Radio* (24 May 1993a).

<sup>143</sup> *Serbian TV* (29 June 1993); *Russia's Radio* (30 June 1993).

<sup>144</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (31 July 1993).

<sup>145</sup> Russian Federation MFA (23 August 1993).



subsequent plans were based on *de facto* partition, beginning with the three-part confederation plan proposed by the Serbs and Croats. Russia endorsed this, and, in fact, Kozyrev played an active role in facilitating acceptance of *de facto* partition.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, Reneo Lukic and Allen Lynch's claim that the shelving of the VOPP, and the acceptance of Serb territorial gains as the basis of a settlement, represented 'a considerable victory for Russian diplomacy', and that 'the effective ratification of Serbian military gains in Bosnia and Herzegovina ... has come about largely through Russia's diplomatic intervention' is simply not true.<sup>147</sup> The MFA and Yeltsin genuinely favoured the adoption of the VOPP; whether they were prepared to countenance the kind of action necessary to see it implemented is another matter.

But there is also no evidence to prove James Gow's assertion that the US failure to endorse 'progressive implementation' of the VOPP marked a turning-point in Russian policy after which there was a 'realisation that its faith in Washington had not been returned' leading to an emphasis on great power status and the need for forceful assertion of a policy based on national interests.<sup>148</sup> This shift occurred, but the failure of the VOPP does not seem to have been the pivot. The change was more gradual than this implies and was also part of the overall adjustment in foreign policy. Certainly, the US approach was disheartening, given the full support that Russian diplomats had given Vance, Owen, Stoltenberg, and the ICFY as a process. It was also humiliating for Kozyrev in particular that the US Secretary of State refused to attend the UNSC meeting of foreign ministers that Russia had called for 21 May, and instead 'summoned' them to Washington. As the commentator Viktor Levin remarked on *Maiak Radio*, the American reaction after their 'lift and strike' proposal was turned down was 'rather like a child in a sandpit: take your toys away, I'm not playing with you any more'.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, Russian diplomats continued to support international mediation efforts through the ICFY and remained active in the mediation process. Russia shared the fears of the other 'Yugoslav Five' that open divisions might develop between the major powers and was satisfied that the Joint Action Programme averted this.

And, given the problems inherent in it, there may in fact have been some relief in Moscow that the 'progressive implementation' strategy did not proceed. Russia's real unwillingness to provide troops while the conflict continued was demonstrated by subsequent events. Although the Joint Action Programme stated that Russia intended to

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<sup>146</sup> Edemskii (1996), p. 41.

<sup>147</sup> Lukic and Lynch (1996), p. 345.

<sup>148</sup> Gow (1997a), p. 199.

<sup>149</sup> *Maiak Radio* (24 May 1993b).



provide peace-keeping troops in Bosnia in addition to those in Croatia, Russian diplomats soon began to back down on this declaration.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, Iastrzhembskii denied that Russia had ever made such a commitment: consequently, it could not renege on it. Instead, he suggested that the Russian Federation could participate in other ways in the UN operation in Bosnia, perhaps by providing observers stationed along the border (although no resolution on observers existed yet).<sup>151</sup> In the event, no troops were sent until February 1994, and then it was to oversee a local cease-fire deal around Sarajevo accepted by all sides; crucially, the gain in Russian prestige was calculated as counter-balancing the risk to troops (chapter 6).

## Diplomacy after the VOPP

Russia's principles remained the same as before: to encourage negotiations, to retain the arms embargo, and to prevent military intervention. On 30 June, Yeltsin stated in a press conference in Athens that if someone 'insisted on using force, on lifting the weapons embargo, we would exercise our right of veto in the Security Council in order to prevent this'.<sup>152</sup> In fact, in the UNSC the previous evening, in the vote on a draft resolution proposed by the Non-Aligned and Islamic states on lifting the embargo on arms supplies to the Bosnian government, Russia had abstained along with France and Great Britain, while the United States had voted in favour. The resolution fell three votes short of the nine votes required for it to be adopted, and the MFA made it clear that had there been even the slightest chance of the resolution passing, the Russian representative would have used the veto power.<sup>153</sup>

The Russian position was more ambiguous on methods of enforcing existing UNSC resolutions, in particular UNSCRs 770 and 836 (on ensuring the delivery of humanitarian supplies and protecting the safe areas respectively). The Joint Action Programme had shifted emphasis onto the 'safe areas' concept. Srebrenica had been declared a 'safe area' in UNSCR 819 of 16 April 1993; this 'protection' was extended to Sarajevo, Tuzla, Žepa, Goražde, and Bihać in UNSCR 824 of 6 May (see map 5).

<sup>150</sup> In addition to opposition from the Defence Ministry, this was also because it was clear that Britain, France, and Spain did not intend to send additional troops, and that the US had no intention of sending any ground troops to Bosnia.

<sup>151</sup> Abarinov and Andrianova (11 June 1993).

<sup>152</sup> *Russia's Radio* (30 June 1993).

<sup>153</sup> Iusin (1 July 1993).



**Map 5 United Nations safe areas**

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Resolution 836 of 4 June 1993 – after the Washington meeting – strengthened the concept. It authorised (paragraph 5) UNPROFOR, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, to

deter attacks against the safe areas, to monitor the cease-fire, to promote the withdrawal of military or paramilitary units other than those of the Government of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina and to occupy some key points on the ground, in addition to participating in the delivery of humanitarian relief to the population as provided for in resolution 776 (1992) of 14 September 1992.

It also authorised (paragraph 9) UNPROFOR

in addition to the mandate defined in resolutions 770 (1992) of 13 August 1992 and 776 (1992), in carrying out the mandate defined in paragraph 5 above, acting in self-defence, to take the necessary measures, including the use of force, in reply to bombardments against the safe areas by any of the parties or to armed incursion into them or in the event of any deliberate obstruction in or around those areas to the freedom of movement of UNPROFOR or of protected humanitarian convoys.



And (paragraph 10) stated that

Member States, acting nationally or through regional organisations or arrangements, may take, under the authority of the Security Council and subject to close co-ordination with the Secretary-General and UNPROFOR, all necessary measures, through the use of air power, in and around the safe areas in the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina, to support UNPROFOR in the performance of its mandate set out in paragraph 5 and 9 above.

This was the first time that the UNSC had authorised a peace-keeping force to use force except in self-defence, that is to go beyond peace-keeping to enforcement.<sup>154</sup> In a report outlining the operational concept for the safe areas project, the UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, noting that the peace-keeping force would be the 'light option' of 7,600 and thus insufficient to resist a concerted attack on the safe areas,<sup>155</sup> argued that 'particular emphasis must be placed on the availability of a credible air-strike capability provided by Member States'. The first decision to use air power (for air cover or air strikes) in this context, the report stated, would be taken by the Secretary-General himself.<sup>156</sup> In UNSCR 844 of 16 June, the Security Council (including Russia) approved the Secretary-General's report.

These resolutions and the report were not absolutely clear as to the circumstances in which force could be used, but they certainly authorised the provision of close air support to provide air cover for UNPROFOR in the 'safe areas', and also probably the use of strategic air strikes to deter an attack on the 'safe areas', that is limited enforcement measures. Hence, when Bosnian Serb forces launched an assault on Mount Igman above Sarajevo, threatening to complete the encirclement of that 'safe area', the United States argued that resolutions 770 and 836 authorised the use of 'selective air strikes' to 'protect the civilian population and UN "blue helmets"'.<sup>157</sup> However, its European allies and Canada, who had peace-keepers on the ground, continued to be concerned about possible retaliation in the event of air strikes, while UNPROFOR commanders argued that Serb attacks on Mount Igman did not represent a significant threat to Sarajevo.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>154</sup> Leurdijk (1996), pp. 35-36.

<sup>155</sup> The commander of UNPROFOR had estimated that approximately 34,000 additional troops were required to obtain deterrence through strength. Instead, the UNSC approved a 'light option' of only 7,500 (Resolution 844 of 18 June 1993), and even this total was not reached for over a year; Sloan (1998), p. 29.

<sup>156</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 36.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 37-38; Babusenko (4 August 1993).

<sup>158</sup> Owen (1996), pp. 219-222.



As for the Russian view, an unnamed senior MFA official admitted that the resolutions provided for 'defence of "safe areas"' but argued that this did not mean that these actions could be taken 'outside the normal procedure', meaning without direct UN authorisation, as outlined in Boutros-Ghali's report.<sup>159</sup> The director of the MFA's Information and Press Department, Grigorii Karasin, elaborated, explaining that the decision on the first air strike to protect UN troops must be taken by the UN Secretary-General after consultation with representatives of the five permanent members of the UNSC, in order to maintain firm and strict UN control over any operations. Subsequent strikes could, if necessary, be carried out on the orders of the UN forces commander, but a report to the UNSC would be obligatory. As Karasin put it, in this way 'any possible action will be of a genuinely UN nature', reflecting Russian concerns that the UN role would be diminished and NATO would take the decisions.<sup>160</sup> At the very least, Moscow should be consulted before any specific step was undertaken.<sup>161</sup>

But the reality was that Russia opposed the use of air strikes, despite having voted for the relevant resolutions in the Security Council. On 2 August, after extensive talks, NATO announced that it had decided to make 'immediate preparations for undertaking, in the event that the strangulation of Sarajevo and other safe areas continues, including wide-scale interference with humanitarian assistance, stronger measures including air strikes against those responsible'.<sup>162</sup> Contradicting previous statements, Karasin responded by stating that Moscow proceeded from the premise that the UNSC resolutions permitted the use of air power only for the protection of UN peace-keepers; US plans for pre-emptive strikes against Bosnian Serb positions were unacceptable, he argued, because they would contradict resolutions 770 and 836.<sup>163</sup> On 9 August, the North Atlantic Council approved the 'operational options' (command and control and decision-making arrangements) for air strikes. It was careful to point out, however, that it agreed with the 'position of the UN Secretary-General that the first use of air power in the theatre shall be authorised by him', and stressed that possible strikes 'must not be interpreted as a decision to intervene militarily in the conflict'.<sup>164</sup>

In response, Kozyrev personally contacted the Yugoslav and American leaderships to convey 'Moscow's firm position in favour of a swift political settlement to the

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<sup>159</sup> *Interfax* (2 August 1993).

<sup>160</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (30 July 1993).

<sup>161</sup> *Interfax* (2 August 1993).

<sup>162</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 38.

<sup>163</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (3 August 1993).

<sup>164</sup> Leurdijk (1996), pp. 38-39.



Yugoslav crisis and against gambling on strong-arm methods of solving it'.<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, the result of the NATO threat was that the Bosnian Serbs backed down over Sarajevo. On 18 August, Boutros-Ghali informed the UNSC that the United Nations now had the 'initial operation capability for the use of air power in support of UNPROFOR'; the same day, NATO carried out its first air support exercise. The Bosnian Serbs stopped their attack on Mount Igman and the area came under UN control.<sup>166</sup> As Dick Leurdijk explains,

It was the first time that the UN – through NATO – really threatened to use force and the Bosnian Serbs gave in. This outcome would have important consequences for later decisions on air strikes in the context of NAC's decisions on Sarajevo, Goražde and the other safe areas.<sup>167</sup>

## After the October clash

In October 1993, during the clash between the administration and the parliament in Russia, Serb nationalist forces hoped for the victory of their natural allies. As Sergei Gryzunov expressed it:

Every time that a crisis arises in Russia ... they open the champagne in Belgrade, and every time they grieve in Belgrade when those forces who want to restore the old order in Russia lose.<sup>168</sup>

After its defeat of parliament, the administration had a relatively free hand in foreign policy. Both Lenard Cohen and Robin Remington refer to the vote on extension of UNPROFOR's mandate as an indication of a temporary shift in Russia's policy towards the Bosnian conflict,<sup>169</sup> similar to that which occurred after Yeltsin's victory in the referendum in April. Russia voted on 4 October for UNSCR 871 which extended UNPROFOR's mandate in former Yugoslavia until 31 March 1994. The vote had twice been postponed because of Russia's objections to a draft that tied the lifting of sanctions against the FRY to the Krajina crisis.<sup>170</sup> As a statement by the MFA explained:

During the consultations before the resolution was passed, there had been attempts to link the issue of extending UNPROFOR's mandate – and, on a wider scale, the resolution of the situation in Croatia – with the sanctions against the Federal

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<sup>165</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (10 August 1993).

<sup>166</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 39.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>168</sup> Gryzunov (27 April 1994).

<sup>169</sup> Cohen (1994), pp. 834-5; Remington (1994), p. 162.

<sup>170</sup> *Tanjug* (6 October 1993).



Republic of Yugoslavia, whose gradual lifting – simultaneous with reaching a solution in Bosnia – the Russian Federation advocates. In our opinion, such links are not in line with earlier decisions by the UN Security Council, and they do not take into consideration the role which the FRY has recently played.<sup>171</sup>

In other words, the MFA claimed – correctly – that sanctions had been introduced against the FRY because of its involvement in the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, not because of the unresolved situation in Croatia; consequently, sanctions should be lifted now that the FRY had begun to isolate the Bosnian Serbs and to co-operate with the international community.

As a result of Russian objections, the linkage in the resolution was made more ambiguous; according to the MFA, the new formulation ‘should in no way be understood as a unilateral threat or an attempt at creating a direct link’.<sup>172</sup> This suggests that the MFA voted for the resolution because of amendments to it, rather than because, as Remington argues, it agreed to link the removal of sanctions to a peace deal for Croatia after the victory over parliament.<sup>173</sup> Yet, the Russian Ambassador to Croatia appeared to confirm the impact of domestic events; speaking on Croatian Television, he said that Russia voted for Resolution 871 only after an intercession of the Croatian President Franjo Tudjman with Yeltsin and only at a time when it was clear that the supporters of the dissolved parliament would be defeated: ‘Minister Kozyrev and Ambassador Vorontsov gave their consent to the resolution after the fall of the Supreme Soviet in Moscow,’ he explained. In his view, the postponement of the vote had been linked with the situation in Moscow, and Tudjman’s request to Yeltsin had come at a time when the rebel parliament and its supporters were losing the battle.<sup>174</sup>

So, Russia would not have voted for the resolution while the battle with parliament continued. Nevertheless, the MFA was probably sincere in its refusal to vote for a resolution directly linking the lifting of sanctions with the issue of Croatia, since this would undermine its policy regarding sanctions: gradual lifting in response to positive moves from Belgrade in relation to Bosnia.<sup>175</sup> Hence, as in April 1993 with UNSCR 820, events in Russia affected the timing and emphasis of Russian diplomacy in the Security Council, but did not alter its general principles. The fact that Yeltsin now had a

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<sup>171</sup> *Tanjug* (5 October 1993).

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>173</sup> Remington (1994), p. 162.

<sup>174</sup> *Tanjug* (6 October 1993).

<sup>175</sup> See, for example, Churkin’s comments in Belgrade, *ITAR-TASS* (11 November 1993). The MFA also wanted the UNSC to allow delivery of natural gas to the FRY for the winter for humanitarian reasons; statement by Karasin, *ITAR-TASS* (14 December 1993).



‘free hand’ in foreign policy did not result in any significant shift in policy towards Yugoslavia; for instance, Kozyrev continued to reject any military intervention and, according to Edemskii, promised to veto any such proposals.<sup>176</sup>

It should be noted, of course, that Yeltsin was not as ‘free’ as might appear. First, his reliance on the military in the clash of October 1993 made him more dependent on the General Staff and the Defence Ministry, whose position on military intervention in the Yugoslav conflicts, for example, was clear. Second, with elections to the new Duma due in December 1993, the Yeltsin administration could not risk undertaking any venture that would be attacked vociferously in much of the press and – it was assumed – would cost votes.

The election results – with Vladimir Zhirinovskii’s ultra-nationalist ‘Liberal Democratic Party’ receiving almost a quarter of the votes and thus 63 seats in the State Duma, and the Communist Party and their allies gaining 100 seats – were interpreted by some commentators as a popular rejection of the Kozyrev-Yeltsin foreign policy. For example, Aleksei Bogaturov wrote in *Nezavisimaia gazeta* that the election results illustrated the ‘contradiction’ that had arisen ‘between the ideological-political universalism of the government’s foreign policy and the mood in society’. In relation to Kozyrev’s pro-Westernism, he argued that ‘this mindless following after our Western partners only compromises the West in the eyes of Russia’s people, giving rise to anti-foreigner sentiments and rocking the ship of state’.<sup>177</sup> This account seems rather out of date, however; it is simply not valid to accuse Russian foreign policy in 1993 of mindlessly following the West. Gennadii Sysoev described in *Izvestiia* how people in Belgrade always asked the same question: ‘Why doesn’t Russia give a firm “no” to the West on the Yugoslav crisis?’ His answer was:

Moscow hasn’t forgotten how to say “no”, when it considers it necessary, of course. It said “no” to foreign military intervention in Bosnia and to lifting the arms embargo on the Muslims. Were it not for that Russian “no”, who knows how the situation in the Balkans would have turned out?<sup>178</sup>

It is likely that those who voted for the LDPR and for the Communists were more concerned with economic issues – rejecting the reform course pursued by the Yeltsin administration – and the former Soviet Union, rather than issues further abroad. Nevertheless, one analysis of voter attitudes showed that there was a ‘solid basis of

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<sup>176</sup> Edemskii (1996), p. 41.

<sup>177</sup> Bogaturov (29 December 1993).

<sup>178</sup> Sysoev (10 November 1993).



support for anti-Western and anti-minority positions, though these attitudes, the latter in particular, are less widely shared among the population than the more basic antipathies to the course of market and democratic reform so far'.<sup>179</sup> And Vera Tolz suggested that 'the vote for Zhirinovskii seems to indicate that national pride is a significant issue in Russia today'.<sup>180</sup> Kozyrev himself rejected the theory of some Western observers that the election results were 'proof that an "imperial consciousness" is practically a national trait among the Russian people', and argued that in his Murmansk electoral district, voters were 'reacting against the unbearably high social price of market reforms'.<sup>181</sup> Yet, he could not ignore the widespread desire for national assertiveness that the elections revealed.

Under the new constitution, which was adopted by referendum on the same day as the elections, the President should 'exercise guidance over the foreign policy of the Russian Federation' (Article 86), while the government was responsible for 'the realisation of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation' (Article 114). According to Kozyrev, this meant that foreign policy was the prerogative of the President; therefore the election results could not fundamentally alter Russia's foreign policy.<sup>182</sup> Nevertheless, the administration was eager to co-operate with the new Federal Assembly; Kozyrev suggested that when the Duma had met and formulated its approach, it could influence the shaping of foreign and domestic policy. And the following day, he stated that changes would be made in Moscow's foreign policy, not to please Zhirinovskii, but because it was essential to take into account people's problems and sentiments as revealed in the elections. In fact, the impact of the elections on the presentation – if not the content – of policy towards Yugoslavia was immediate. On 21 December, the MFA claimed that two resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly – 'On Human Rights Violations in the Former Yugoslavia' and 'The Situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina' – suffered from a one-sided, accusatory slant and were anti-Serb in nature.<sup>183</sup>

## Russia and NATO

Yeltsin and Kozyrev now became more committed to proving Russia's independent stance and its great power status. The elections were the final impetus in this process, which was dictated to a large degree by domestic calculations. Nevertheless, we should

<sup>179</sup> Whitefield and Evans (1994), p. 51.

<sup>180</sup> Tolz (14 January 1994), p. 7.

<sup>181</sup> Kozyrev (1994a), p. 61.

<sup>182</sup> Karpov (17 December 1993).

<sup>183</sup> Velekhov (22 December 1993).



not ignore the impact of international developments, including events in former Yugoslavia. The most significant trend connecting Russia's security concerns in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, events in Yugoslavia, and domestic opinion was the evolving role of NATO.

A report by Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR), presented by its then director Evgenii Primakov on 25 November 1993, expressed concerns about NATO expansion if it was not matched by a change in the Alliance's functions, although it acknowledged that Russia had 'no right to dictate to the sovereign states of Central and Eastern Europe whether or not they should join NATO or other international organisations'.<sup>184</sup> Boris Poklad in *Pravda* was more forthright:

No one should be misled by the assertions of NATO leaders that this organisation is now supposedly needed for peace-keeping activity and for the elimination of military conflicts. This alliance cannot live without tense situations and various types of cataclysm. If such conflicts do not arise of their own accord, NATO will generate them...

Taking advantage of the destabilisation of the situation in the countries of the former USSR and putting forth every conceivable pretext (such as 'preventing new Yugoslavias' and the emergence of a threat to the security of the NATO member-countries), this organisation is trying to extend its peace-keeping operations in Europe to the East. In the West, there are already calls for the expansion of NATO's 'sphere of responsibility' to all countries of the former USSR, including the Baltic republics.<sup>185</sup>

In the context of general disillusionment with the West as described in chapter 2, the prospect of NATO expansion may have had some impact on the December elections. But the effect was to create a vicious circle, since the Zhirinovskii vote in Russia caused such alarm in Central and Eastern European states that they began to look more urgently towards NATO to guarantee their security, or at least – as it was seen by many in Moscow – they used Zhirinovskii's success as a pretext.<sup>186</sup> The increased likelihood of NATO expansion that resulted from lobbying by Central/Eastern European states in turn led not only to more threats by Zhirinovskii, but also to more forceful Russian opposition at the official level. Kozyrev, for instance, declared that he would not allow any of Russia's near or distant neighbours to play on the Zhirinovskii factor. He believed that the Baltic states would cite Zhirinovskii's success in the elections to

<sup>184</sup> *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (26 November 1993).

<sup>185</sup> Poklad (29 December 1993).

<sup>186</sup> See, for example, Nikiforov (17 December 1993).



demand immediate withdrawal of Russian Federation troops (although troops had already been withdrawn from Lithuania in August 1993), while Eastern European states would request rapid admission to NATO. He warned that the governments of the three Baltic republics should not demand concessions from Russia, but rather work with Russia to improve the situation of the Russian-speaking population and thereby deprive Zhirinovskii of a social base. If this did not happen, Moscow's position would become tougher.<sup>187</sup> All of this, of course, was calculated to appeal to the perceived public mood in Russia; the next Duma elections were, after all, only two years ahead.

NATO action in Yugoslavia was now seen in the context of NATO expansion and NATO's search for a new role. Boris Poklad again provides an extreme statement of a common perception:

the events in Yugoslavia have proven to be a life-saver for the US and its allies. NATO's interference in Yugoslavia's affairs under the UN flag was supposed to demonstrate the need for this alliance under new conditions and to justify its existence. The operations in Iraq and Somalia are evidence of the same intent.<sup>188</sup>

It was certainly true that the Clinton administration wanted NATO to take the leading role in any peace-keeping or intervention operation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and desired to reduce the UN's control of operations. Surely an element in this was the aim to demonstrate NATO's relevance, although the *Pravda* view that this was the reason for Western intervention in Yugoslavia (let alone in Somalia and Iraq), and that NATO had fomented such conflicts for that purpose, is a paranoid delusion. Problems had been revealed with the operating provisions for NATO action under UN command in Bosnia;<sup>189</sup> in particular, the dual-key mechanism for the authorisation of air cover to protect UNPROFOR troops under attack took too much time and consequently put troops in danger;<sup>190</sup> and the United States wanted more robust action and felt hindered by the UN Secretary-General's envoy Yasushi Akashi and by local UNPROFOR commanders. NATO also had the command and control structures and the capability to organise a peace-keeping mission after a settlement was signed, and it had the most advanced air forces for air strikes and provision of air cover while the war continued.

Elinor Sloan has argued that, by 1994, Western states had begun to consider that their national interests were now being challenged by the continuing conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina:

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<sup>187</sup> Mlechin (18 December 1993).

<sup>188</sup> Poklad (29 December 1993).

<sup>189</sup> Sloan (1998), pp. 106-7.

<sup>190</sup> The dual-key arrangement was introduced in September 1993; Andreatta (1997), p. 18.



In 1992 and much of 1993 the Bosnian crisis posed a threat primarily to core values. Such a threat was not sufficient to create the political will required to intervene on behalf of the Muslims, and as a result, the international community adopted the minimalist measures of delivering humanitarian aid and protecting safe havens. In the summer of 1993 the United States started talking about a threat to core interests – in the form of a threat to NATO credibility – but these interests were not enough to compel the United States to take the lead and convince the European powers of the merits of intervention, much less to prompt it to ‘go it alone’ and abandon what was the powers’ paramount interest: alliance and great power unity to contain the crisis.

The collapse of the European Union peace effort in the fall of 1993 meant that by early 1994 the European powers had begun to consider Western credibility – and thus core interests – to be at stake in Bosnia.<sup>191</sup>

Hence, Clinton told the NATO summit in Brussels in January 1994: ‘What is at stake is not only the safety of the people in Sarajevo and any possibility of bringing this terrible conflict to an end, but the credibility of the Alliance itself’.<sup>192</sup>

If NATO credibility made action over Bosnia a perceived national interest for Western powers, then it made NATO *inaction* a perceived national interest for Russia. After all, if NATO was intent on expansion into Eastern Europe and the Baltics, and sought a peace-keeping role that might bring it into other parts of the former Soviet Union, then Russian diplomats wanted it to fail at the first attempt. Furthermore, from a neo-realist perspective, NATO action might result in Russia being pushed aside and its great power aspirations being thwarted, such that its presence in a region of traditional Russian interests would be threatened. Thus, the overall security environment and the specifics of the Yugoslav conflict combined to force Russian policy-makers to consider the Yugoslav conflict to have strategic significance, and thus reinforced the general move towards a neo-realist approach.

By the end of 1993, then, Russia was set on a more assertive course. This was demonstrated by its actions during the Sarajevo crisis in February 1994.

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<sup>191</sup> Sloan (1998), p. 109.

<sup>192</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 40; see also Sloan (1998), p. 57.



## Chapter 6

### The Sarajevo crisis, February 1994: Russian neo-realism in action

In the new year, 1994, there was another addition to the list of unofficial Russian ambassadors who had visited former Yugoslavia in order to declare their solidarity with their Serb or Montenegrin hosts: Vladimir Zhirinovskii, leader of the so-called Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR), which had gained the most votes on the party lists in the Duma elections. Zhirinovskii became the first member of the new Duma to visit former Yugoslavia (the second was to be Gennadii Ziuganov, leader of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, the CPRF). He was invited by the Serb Democratic Party of Serbian Lands and the Serbian-Russian Friendship Society, and was greeted everywhere by local political leaders and astonishingly large crowds.

In Podgorica (capital of Montenegro), Zhirinovskii held talks with the Secretary-General of the Democratic Party of Socialists and representatives of most of the Montenegrin opposition parties. Afterwards, a crowd of over 50,000 gathered in Ivan Milutinović Square to hear him speak, giving frequent shouts of 'Russia, Russia' and 'Vladimir, Vladimir'. Addressing his audience mainly as 'brother Serbs', Zhirinovskii delivered his analysis of the conflicts:

The world wants to divide the Balkans into many little statelets, so that the West can Catholicise half the peninsular, and Islamise the other half. They are trying to destroy our Orthodox religion, and your only fault is that you are on the border with the West, and therefore the attacks on you are all the fiercer.

He assured them, however, that they need have no fear: regarding sanctions, Russia would give them all the imports they needed, while for defence, Russia had not only state-of-the-art weapons, but also a secret sonar weapon which it would use for its own defence and for the defence of its 'Orthodox brothers'. More pragmatically, he reminded his audience that there were still Russian soldiers in Germany: 'If the Germans have lost their appetite for war, if necessary, we will transfer those 300,000 soldiers from Germany to the Balkans and help the Serbs.'<sup>1</sup>

After visiting Serb fighters in Brčko (Bosnia) and Erdut (Eastern Slavonia),<sup>2</sup> he made his final speech of the tour in Vukovar, to two thousand loyal fans. It was a

<sup>1</sup> *Tanjug* (1 February 1994) and *Serbian Radio* (1 February 1994).

<sup>2</sup> *Tanjug* (2 February 1994).



thoroughly fitting climax, bringing together the diverse threads of his pronouncements during the visit:

Who dares say it? Who dares claim falsely that Serbia is a small country? It's not small! It's not small! Three times it has waged war! Here is an old country that has an emperor in heaven! Serbia, our dear mother, gave birth to us all. Long live Serbia!

We Slavs cannot continue to be the victims of the struggle to save Western civilisation from the barbarians. The time has come to repay us for all our sacrifices. There are 300 million of us altogether.

I assure the governments of some Western countries that using force will not help them. If a single bomb falls on the towns of Bosnia, I warn you that this means a declaration of war on Russia, and we will punish them for it. My name, Vladimir, means "ruler of the world". Let us Slavs rule the world in the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup>

It would seem that, by this stage, he had absorbed key themes of contemporary Serbian mythology. Unfortunately, he did not show the same aptitude for recent military history when, in the same speech, he condemned the 'barbarians who destroyed this marvellous city', thus putting his hosts in a rather awkward position.<sup>4</sup>

The content of much of this rhetoric was, of course, far from original, directly echoing the refrains of Russian 'red-brown' forces that I quoted in chapter 4. We might interpret Zhirinovskii's philosophy when applied to the Yugoslav conflicts as a mixture of pan-Orthodoxy, pan-Slavism, and anti-Westernism. Or we might simply agree with the man whose removal he repeatedly demanded and whom he described as 'America's extended hand',<sup>5</sup> the Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, that Zhirinovskii was a 'medical, not a political, problem', and enter his global competition to find a cure.<sup>6</sup>

Yet, the impact of the extreme nationalists was not as negligible as this comment might imply. It is true that their direct influence on policy was limited, but the election results and the fact that the Duma was dominated by nationalists and state centrists reinforced the move towards a neo-realist approach in official policy, including towards the Yugoslav crisis. Yeltsin did not want to be vulnerable to attacks on the administration's foreign policy and aimed to avoid further confrontation with parliament. Increasingly, government officials used the threat posed by the extreme

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<sup>3</sup> Frazer and Lancelle (1994), p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Iusin (5 February 1994).

<sup>5</sup> *Tanjug* (1 February 1994).

<sup>6</sup> Sestanovich (11 April 1994), p. 25.



opposition forces to seek acceptance in the West of policies that they believed to be in Russia's interests or which they believed necessary to protect their own political positions. For example, they warned that NATO expansion would strengthen the hand of the red-brown alliance; and they used a similar argument to avert more forceful NATO action in former Yugoslavia. Consequently, a paradoxical situation arose whereby the government insisted on a policy supported by the opposition in order ostensibly to prevent the opposition from implementing its policies.

## **The new Russian Duma**

There was a high degree of continuity with the situation in the Supreme Soviet. Although the chairmanship of one committee, the Committee on Geopolitical Issues, was given to an LDPR member, Viktor Ustinov, the very creation of this committee was said to be a kind of 'compensation' to the LDPR for the fact that the key foreign policy committee, the Committee for International Affairs, was to be chaired by Vladimir Lukin.<sup>7</sup> Lukin had previously been the Russian Ambassador to Washington, and his strained relations with Kozyrev were 'no secret'.<sup>8</sup> His approach was close to that of his predecessor, Evgenii Ambartsumov (Ambartsumov was a member of the *Iabloko* faction of which Lukin was a leader), and reflected a neo-realist/state centric outlook. For example, after the first Duma debate on the Yugoslav conflicts, he was reported as telling journalists that Russia's interests were served by the strongest possible Serbia and Montenegro and, at the same time, a peaceful solution of the conflicts in former Yugoslavia; while characterising the MFA's course as 'correct' on the whole, he claimed that it had made a serious mistake in supporting sanctions against the FRY. He also suggested that the West's position on the former Yugoslavia was not in keeping with Russia's interests in the Balkan region in all respects, and opposed any air strikes or forceful methods of resolving the conflicts.<sup>9</sup>

As chairman of the International Affairs Committee, Lukin, like Ambartsumov in the Supreme Soviet, had control of the agenda for Duma discussions of foreign policy issues. This was shown by the outcome of the first debate on former Yugoslavia in the Duma, which was the first discussion of any foreign policy question (on 21 January 1994). The Duma resolution, based on the Committee's draft, said that the Duma was greatly concerned about NATO discussions of possible air strikes:

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<sup>7</sup> Karpov (19 January 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Iusin (26 January 1994).

<sup>9</sup> Sidorov (25 January 1994).



The State Duma considers that forceful measures not only will not lead to the end of the war in this region but, on the contrary, will intensify the conflict and bring further suffering and agony to the local people.<sup>10</sup>

An amendment proposed by the Agrarian faction was also adopted, calling on the Russian Federation's permanent representative on the UNSC to propose an initiative in the UNSC to lift the sanctions imposed on the FRY. The final statement was adopted by a vote of 280 for, 2 against, and 8 abstentions.

Hence, the Duma adopted a policy towards the conflicts that was very close to the Supreme Soviet's policy before it was forcibly dissolved in October 1993. The administration demonstrated its conciliatory approach towards the Duma by accepting the proposals and emphasising that they matched the government's own policy. For example, at the Duma hearings, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed satisfaction with the Committee's draft, saying that it had 'something in common' with the official position that he himself had outlined, as did the amendment concerning sanctions.<sup>11</sup> And Vitalii Churkin said that there were 'no radical contradictions' between what the MFA was doing and what was said in the Duma's declaration'.<sup>12</sup> This was not merely conciliatory politics; it was an illustration of the consensus that had developed in foreign policy between the government and the Duma.

## **The use of force in Bosnia-Herzegovina**

### **The Russian position**

The Duma debate had been called because of the renewed threat of NATO air strikes (see below), and Lavrov devoted most of his speech to this issue. Russia, he stated, had never supported forceful measures to resolve the conflicts, even if one side disagreed with the course of peace negotiations or did not sign an agreement relating to the division of the territory: 'This is a purely negotiating process, it has no relation to those conditions when the UNSC permits the use of coercive measures,' he stated.<sup>13</sup> Existing UNSC resolutions possessed very strict and limited criteria for the justification of the use of force, as well as defining the process by which a decision could be reached. According to Lavrov, force could be used only in three instances: in the event of an attack on a convoy delivering humanitarian aid, violation of the no-fly zone, or 'direct obstruction of the UN peace-keeping forces in carrying out their mandate' for the

<sup>10</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (21 January 1994a).

<sup>11</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (21 January 1994b), p. 660.

<sup>12</sup> Russian Federation MFA (25 January 1994), p. 40.

<sup>13</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (21 January 1994b), pp. 653-4.



maintenance of the safe areas.<sup>14</sup> Lavrov emphasised the fact that these were in no way anti-Serb resolutions: whichever side carried out any of these three actions would be considered a violator. A special procedure was required for force then to be used:

In all the enumerated decisions the question is only about a threat of the use of force against a violator. Its actual use requires a special additional procedure – consultations between the secretary general and the members of the Security Council. Our position in the course of such consultations, if they begin, will be negative.<sup>15</sup>

This would seem to indicate an *a priori* rejection of the use of air strikes in any circumstances.

These comments were made specifically in relation to the decision by NATO at its January 1994 summit to re-affirm its August 1993 declaration. Lavrov claimed that certain NATO countries had made attempts to establish a ‘simplified interpretation’ of the strict criteria for the use of force that he had outlined, as well as a simplified interpretation of the authorisation procedure.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, in all cases, according to Lavrov, Russian representatives had resisted such attempts, insisting on observing the UNSC decisions. This had occurred, for instance, in autumn 1993, and to a large degree thanks to this position, the question of air strikes had been removed from the agenda.<sup>17</sup> Now, the issue had arisen again, in a blatantly anti-Serb context and hence departed from the UNSC decisions, which envisaged measures to exert influence on all sides in the conflict.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, Russia had been pushed aside in the decision-making process:

It hasn’t helped matters, of course, that Russia was not even informed of the preparation of the [NATO] declaration. Russia is an active participant in the settlement process of the Yugoslav crisis, a permanent member of the Security Council of the UN; it is impossible to use any kind of force in Bosnia and Herzegovina without consultation with it.<sup>19</sup>

His earlier comments, however, show that it was impossible to use force even with consultation with Russia.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 654.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 655.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 655-6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 656.



It appears, in fact, that there was some disagreement within the Russian government concerning the use of force in former Yugoslavia. Vitalii Churkin, at a briefing on 2 January 1994, stated that Russia had voted for UNSC resolutions that envisaged conditions for the use of force – including air strikes – in the event of attacks on UN peace-keepers, deliberate obstruction of humanitarian operations, or attacks on safe areas. The final point is significantly different from Lavrov's formulation, since Lavrov only includes 'safe areas' in the context of hindering the UN peace-keepers. Churkin appeared therefore more willing to accept the implications of UNSC resolutions for which Russia had voted. Like Lavrov, he emphasised that the procedure for authorisation of strikes must be followed, and pointed out that the resolutions referred to all sides. In this context, he gave the example of Mostar where, he said, Croat forces had for the previous ten days been blocking one of the main routes for the supply of aid to Sarajevo:

There may occur other, more dramatic turns of events in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was for this that the resolution was adopted. That is why we ought, in my opinion, to use the potential, placed in the resolution, in order not to allow those negative and outrageous occurrences, the possibility of which the resolution speaks.<sup>20</sup>

Nevertheless, with the increased likelihood of imminent NATO air strikes in February 1994, Lavrov's formulation became the dominant interpretation in Moscow. Kozyrev admitted that 'hypothetically the possibility of air strikes exists' in case of an attack on UN peace-keepers, but stated that 'punishment strikes' were 'absolutely inadmissible'.<sup>21</sup> The Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, also made it clear that Russia was categorically opposed to Western air strikes on Bosnian Serb positions.<sup>22</sup> The consensus was reinforced when the Defence Minister Pavel Grachev stated on 8 February that 'the use of NATO countries' combat aviation in Bosnia-Herzegovina is capable of provoking a new escalation of combat actions and is permissible only in the event of a direct attack by Bosnian armed formations on the peace-keeping forces'.<sup>23</sup>

Hence, the Russian position was defined: air strikes could be used only to protect UN peace-keepers in the event of an attack and they must be authorised by the UN Secretary-General after consultation with the permanent members of the Security

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<sup>20</sup> Russian Federation MFA (25 January 1994), p. 43.

<sup>21</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (1 February 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Iusin (3 February 1994). Iusin reports that an MFA diplomat explained that Chernomyrdin apparently had in mind 'punitive strikes', and so did not rule out air strikes in the event of attacks on UN forces.

<sup>23</sup> *Radio Moscow International* (8 February 1994).



Council. Close air support (to defend UN peace-keepers), as opposed to strategic air strikes (to enforce a local or general peace), were considered legitimate in theory, although initial authorisation must come from the UN Secretary-General after consultations. In practice, this would compromise the efficacy of air support in protecting UN troops, since the procedure was so lengthy as to render any action either inappropriate in changed circumstances, or simply too late. In outlining this procedure, Kozyrev seemed unaware of its military inappropriateness:

In this case [a direct attack on UN peace-keeping forces], the UN military command in Bosnia should submit a proposal on military support, including air support, to the UN secretary-general, who is to consult permanent Security Council members. Then we shall adopt a decision. In Russia, the decision will be adopted by the president.<sup>24</sup>

The protection of peace-keepers in Sarajevo, Srebrenica, etc., thus depended on Boutros-Ghali being able to contact Yeltsin, and the latter being conscious, sober, and in a magnanimous mood.

Existing UNSC resolutions did authorise the use of strategic air strikes; not, as Russian diplomats correctly pointed out, for the imposition of a peace deal, but for the protection of the 'safe areas' and delivery of humanitarian aid. The Russian position as now formulated was thus not consistent with UNSC resolutions for which they themselves had voted, a point made by Ambartsumov in the Duma debate: 'I fear that the Russian side has, to a certain degree, already fallen into the trap of previous [UNSC] decisions'.<sup>25</sup> One only has to compare the attitude of Russian diplomats at the start of 1994 with the statement of the Russian representative on the UN Security Council, Iulii Vorontsov, immediately after sponsoring and voting for Resolution 836 on 4 June 1993:

The Russian delegation is firmly convinced that the implementation of this resolution will be an important practical step by the world community genuinely to curb the violence and to stop the shooting on the long-suffering land of the Bosnians. Henceforth, any attempted military attacks, shooting and shelling of safe areas, any armed incursions into those areas, and any hindrance to the delivery of humanitarian assistance will be stopped by using all necessary measures, including the use of armed force. This will be an important factor for stabilising the situation in these areas and for lessening the suffering of the civilian population.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (7 February 1994).

<sup>25</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (21 January 1994b), p. 660.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Security Council (4 June 1993), p. 46.



The change was soon demonstrated by Russia's reaction to the threat of NATO air strikes in response to just such a 'negative and outrageous occurrence', the possibility of which Churkin had warned.

### **NATO's position**

While the Russian position in relation to air strikes was becoming clearer, so too was that of NATO. The NATO summit held in Brussels from 10-11 January 1994 was concerned primarily with the question of NATO's post-Cold War role and its relations with the former Warsaw Pact states. The Russian elections had caused alarm in Central/Eastern Europe, leading to calls for membership of NATO. In the Russian government's view, NATO expansion would play into the hands of nationalists in Russia since it would spark an anti-Western reaction.<sup>27</sup> This argument appeared to influence the Clinton administration;<sup>28</sup> appeals from Eastern Europe were resisted, and the NATO members decided instead to offer the Partnership for Peace programme as a way of developing relations with those states without necessarily having to accept them as members, although they did not rule this out.

After its disaster in Somalia, the US was unwilling to commit itself to such peace enforcement enterprises elsewhere, and resisted French calls to put the war in Bosnia at the top of the agenda at the NATO summit.<sup>29</sup> European states were more intent on dealing with the issue, particularly after the collapse of the Geneva negotiations in December 1993. Despite US reluctance, they succeeded in including in the NATO communiqué a re-affirmation of their readiness to carry out air strikes 'in order to prevent the strangulation of Sarajevo, the safe areas and other threatened areas in Bosnia-Herzegovina'; they also urged the UNPROFOR authorities to 'draw up urgently plans to ensure that the blocked rotation of the UNPROFOR contingent in Srebrenica can take place and to examine how the airport at Tuzla can be opened for humanitarian relief purposes'.<sup>30</sup> French policy makers in particular believed that the credibility of the United Nations and NATO were at stake; the French President Jacques Chirac argued that 'Western democracies are being ridiculed' and that the war in Bosnia was slowly becoming 'not just a war of conscience but a war of self-interest too'.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Zhdannikov (6 January 1994); Mlechin (12 January 1994).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Sloan (1998), p. 56.

<sup>30</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 40. The Serbs were obstructing the replacement of Canadian 'blue helmets' in Srebrenica by Dutch troops.

<sup>31</sup> Sloan (1998), pp. 56-7.



Kozyrev, in a meeting with Owen and Stoltenberg, expressed the necessity for a political resolution of the problems in Srebrenica and Tuzla, and the danger of hasty resort even to limited force.<sup>32</sup> And Lavrov, while admitting that the NATO communiqué reiterating the August declaration was in line with UNSC resolutions, observed that the NATO countries ‘unambiguously gave to their own decision an anti-Serb context’, which was at odds with the UNSC decisions.<sup>33</sup>

It was clear that NATO was moving towards more vigorous action if a crisis situation developed, while Russia was becoming more firmly opposed to any action. Russian diplomats attempted to find a way out of this situation by un-blocking the stalled negotiation process.

## **The negotiating framework**

After the Vance-Owen plan was abandoned, negotiations were based on the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina into three loosely linked, ethnically based entities. The first plan was the Union of Three Republics, under which the Bosnian Serbs would have controlled 52.5 per cent of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Muslims 30 per cent, and the Croats 17.5 per cent (see map 6).

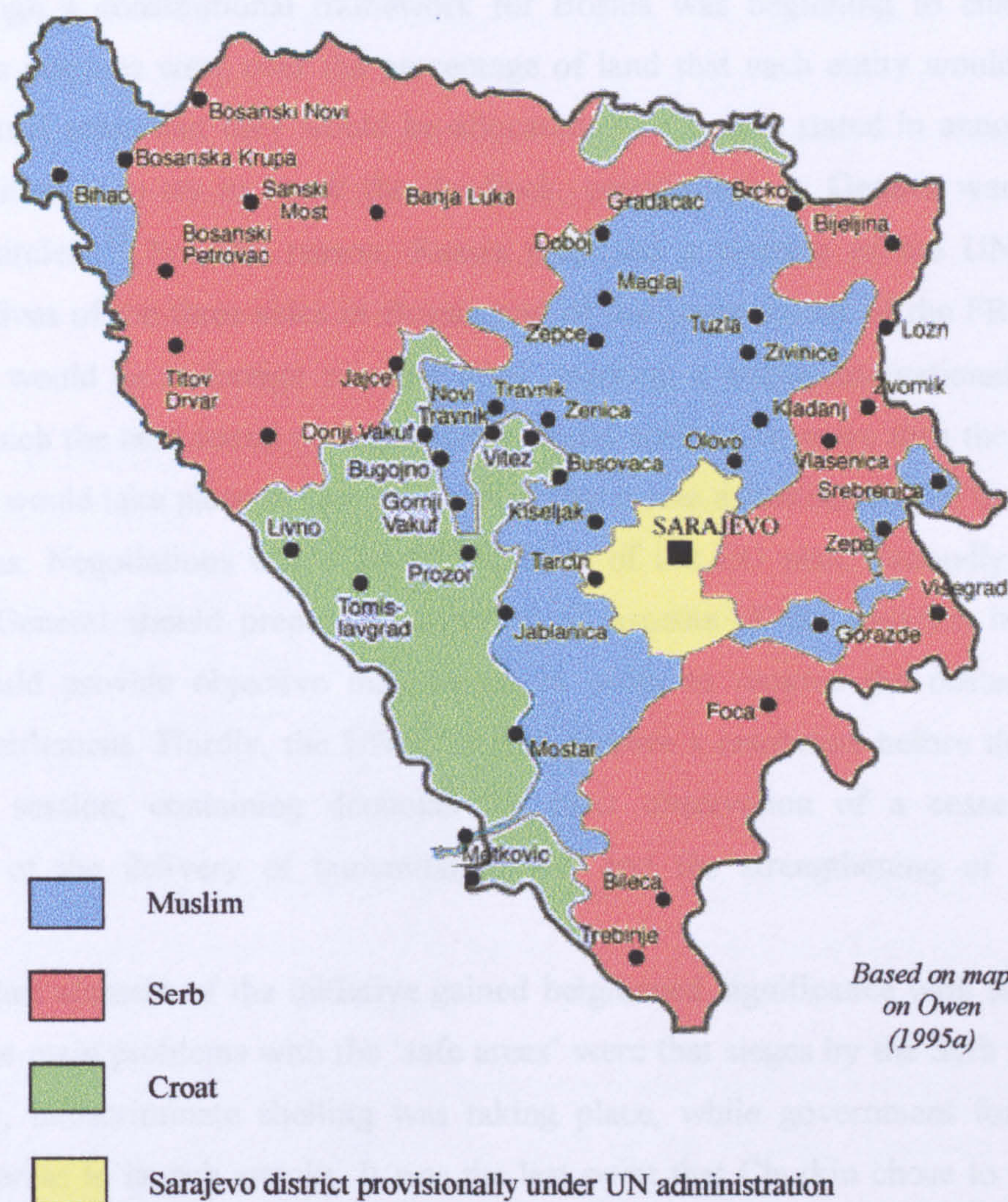
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<sup>32</sup> Russian Federation MFA (1 February 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (21 January 1994b), p. 655.



**Map 6** Union of Three Republics proposal, September 1993



The three parts would be joined in a loose union. However, since much of the Serb entity adjoined Serbia, and the Croat territory adjoined Croatia, there was a danger of the creation of a 'Greater Serbia' and a 'Greater Croatia', while the Muslim mini-state would be composed of disconnected areas linked by vulnerable corridors.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, and because it believed that the thirty per cent of territory allocated to it was insufficient, the Bosnian government rejected the plan.

A modified version then became the basis for a potential agreement, called the European Union Action Plan. This time, the division would be: Serbs 49 per cent, Muslims 33.5 per cent, Croats 17.5 per cent. The plan was presented to the parties at

<sup>34</sup> Sloan (1998), p. 53.



Geneva in November 1993, but again no agreement was reached. By now, the Muslims were gaining territory in Central Bosnia from the Croats, while the Serbs still held almost seventy per cent of the country and were unlikely to yield it voluntarily.

Although a constitutional framework for Bosnia was beginning to emerge, the irresolvable disputes were over the percentage of land that each entity would possess and the actual areas that they would be allocated. As Churkin stated in announcing a Russian initiative to try to break the deadlock, negotiations in Geneva were 'going round in circles'.<sup>35</sup> For this reason, Russia proposed a meeting of the UNSC with representatives of the three sides in Bosnia and of the governments of the FRY and of Croatia. It would be at foreign minister level, marking a strong international impulse without which the next round of negotiations would achieve no more than the previous round, but would take place in Geneva to show that it was a continuation of the existing negotiations. Negotiations would be on the basis of the EU plan. Secondly, the UN Secretary-General should prepare a report on all aspects of the situation in Bosnia, which would provide objective information in order to remove the obstacles to a peaceful settlement. Thirdly, the UNSC should prepare a resolution before the foreign ministers' session, containing demands for strict observation of a cease-fire, the guarantee of the delivery of humanitarian aid, and the strengthening of the 'safe areas'.<sup>36</sup>

This last element of the initiative gained heightened significance with subsequent events. The main problems with the 'safe areas' were that sieges by the Serb side were continuing, indiscriminate shelling was taking place, while government forces were using the areas to launch attacks. It was the last point that Churkin chose to highlight, arguing that the 'safe areas' had been established to protect the peaceful population but, while they continued to perform this role, they were turning into 'areas for the preparation of new military actions'. The key problem, he argued, was that the organisations in charge of the areas had failed to envisage their demilitarisation; Russia therefore proposed strengthening the areas by carrying out full demilitarisation.<sup>37</sup>

According to Churkin, the Russian position was 'objective', directed at achieving an immediate settlement in order to prevent the conflict from spreading and its 'shadow falling far from the Balkans region ... into the Middle East and perhaps beyond'.<sup>38</sup> His

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<sup>35</sup> Russian Federation MFA (25 January 1994), p. 40.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37-38.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*.



interpretation of events was, however, intriguingly different from that prevailing in the West. Rejecting accusations of being anti-Muslim, he stated:

We are convinced that those Muslim politicians who gamble on a victorious resolution of the war, declaring that they are ready to fight for ten years, more if necessary, are inciting their own people to suicide. At this very time, there is an agreement on the negotiation table, which is far from ideal, but which gives to all the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the Muslims, the possibility for survival and for the settlement of numerous issues that, after all that has happened, will for a long time torment Bosnia and Herzegovina and its peoples.<sup>39</sup>

Describing how the EU had formulated definite criteria for a settlement, including that the Serbs guarantee 33.3 per cent of the territory of Bosnia-Herzegovina for the Muslims, he continued:

I will say directly, that, when these conditions were formulated, I considered them to be unrealistic. The negotiations were very difficult, the co-chairmen from the beginning set themselves the target of thirty per cent. The Muslims at present control less than fifteen per cent. Overall, what stands out is that this political settlement is unprecedented. Let me put it frankly: the Muslim side were not able to achieve military success; nonetheless, as a result of negotiations, they more than doubled the territory which they will control. This is an unprecedented success of diplomacy and political negotiations.<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps such a result of political negotiations would have been unprecedented. But this outcome would partly have been the result of the Russian insistence that there should only be political mediation without any military coercion or termination of the arms embargo. Given this demand, it was 'unrealistic' to expect more, and it was 'realistic' to expect the Serbs not to give up a significant area of land. Perhaps Churkin genuinely believed that ending the war was the top priority and that justice had no place in the scheme. Certainly, many Russian commentators shared Churkin's view that the Bosnian Muslims were responsible for blocking a settlement and took the lack of a Western response – in contrast to its strengthening of sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs when they failed to sign the Vance-Owen plan – as evidence of the West's anti-Serb, pro-Muslim bias.<sup>41</sup> But such opinions, by failing to consider justice and morality,

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, Arbatova (1995), p. 55; and Gus'kova (1998a), pp. 32-3.



either conceal an underlying sympathy with the Bosnian Serb cause behind a façade of 'impartiality', or demonstrate a callous, amoral realism.

In contrast to Russia, NATO used the Sarajevo market-place atrocity to pursue 'diplomacy backed by a willingness to use force'.<sup>42</sup>

## The Sarajevo crisis

On 5 February 1994, a mortar shell was fired into the Markale market-place in Sarajevo, killing 68 people and wounding a further 200. This was clearly an event that in the existing climate would push NATO into action. On 6 February, Boutros-Ghali, apparently without consulting the permanent members of the Security Council, wrote to the NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner, asking the North Atlantic Council (NAC) to authorise its military command to launch air strikes on request from the UN.<sup>43</sup>

The Russian MFA expressed outrage at the market-place massacre, stating that 'those guilty of this atrocity, whoever they are, must be severely punished', and urging that a 'swift and objective investigation' be carried out to determine the guilty party.<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, Kozyrev warned against turning the incident into a repeat of Sarajevo in 1914, and urged the world community to be guided by a 'cold, political mind, and not by emotions'.<sup>45</sup> Russian diplomats again questioned the decision-making process for the use of force. As the NAC met to discuss its response to the massacre and Boutros-Ghali's request, one senior Russian diplomat stated: 'We do not accept Boutros-Ghali's arguments, and we do not believe that this case falls under previous Security Council resolutions. Consultations with the members of the Security Council are necessary.' At the very least, the international community should take no steps until responsibility for the massacre had been proven.<sup>46</sup>

Initial UNPROFOR investigations of the incident reached contradictory conclusions.<sup>47</sup> The final investigation by a team of UNPROFOR artillery specialists, including a Russian lieutenant colonel, concluded that the shell could have come from anywhere in a cone of 2.5 square kilometres north to north-east of the market-place overlapping each side of the confrontation line by 2,000 metres. Although this conclusion might have seemed unsatisfactory, it was politically welcome because it enabled action to be taken without appearing to be partial.<sup>48</sup> As has often been pointed

<sup>42</sup> US Ambassador to the UN, Madeleine Albright, quoted in Sloan (1998), p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> Watson (1994), p. 1.

<sup>44</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (6 February 1994).

<sup>45</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (7 February 1994).

<sup>46</sup> Iusin (8 February 1994).

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed account, see Binder (1994-95).

<sup>48</sup> For example, Binder suggests that UNPROFOR commanders were 'greatly relieved'; *ibid.*, p. 77.



out, shelling incidents occurred daily, perpetrated by both sides (although predominantly by Serb forces besieging the city).<sup>49</sup>

In Russia, however, it was assumed that NATO air strikes would be directed only against the Serb side. After the NAC had issued a statement to the warring sides, *Krasnaia zvezda*, for instance, argued that the 'proposal to demand that the Bosnian Serbs withdraw their artillery and tanks from Sarajevo under the threat of air strikes suffers from one-sidedness'.<sup>50</sup> Certainly, NATO was unwilling to launch air strikes against government forces' positions. But it deliberately directed the declaration concerning demilitarisation of Sarajevo to both sides.<sup>51</sup> The declaration stated that the North Atlantic Council:

- (6) condemns the continuing of the siege of Sarajevo, and with a view to ending it calls for the withdrawal, or regrouping and placing under UNPROFOR control within ten days, of heavy weapons (including tanks, artillery pieces, mortars, multiple rocket launchers, missiles and anti-aircraft weapons) of the Bosnian Serb forces located in an area within 20 kilometres of the centre of Sarajevo, and excluding an area within two kilometres of the centre of Pale.
- (7) calls upon the Government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, within the same period, to place the heavy weapons in its possession within the Sarajevo exclusion zone described above under UNPROFOR control, and to refrain from attacks launched from within the current confrontation lines in the city.
- (10) decides that, ten days from 2400 GMT February 10, 1994, heavy weapons of any of the parties found within the Sarajevo exclusion zone, unless controlled by UNPROFOR, will, along with their direct and essential military support facilities, be subject to NATO air strikes which will be conducted in close co-ordination with the UN Secretary General and will be consistent with the North Atlantic Council's decisions of 2nd and 9th August, 1993;
- (11) accepts, effective today, the request of the UN Secretary General of 6th February and accordingly authorises the Commander-in-Chief, Allied Forces Southern Europe to launch air strikes, at the request of the United Nations, against artillery or mortar positions in or around Sarajevo (including any

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, comments by the Czech representative to the UNSC, quoted in Leuridijk (1996), p. 41; also, comments by David Owen in 'A Peace Without Honour' (30 October 1995).

<sup>50</sup> Sidorov (10 February 1994).

<sup>51</sup> Nor did they call it an 'ultimatum', although this was the first time that the demand for withdrawal of weaponry had been tied to a specific deadline, and the first time that NATO had committed itself to using force according to a clearly defined set of criteria; Watson (1994), p. 3.



outside the exclusion zone) which are determined by UNPROFOR to be responsible for attacks against civilian targets in that city.<sup>52</sup>

Russian diplomats broadly supported the aims of the declaration; after all, they had been calling for full demilitarisation of the 'safe areas' since they had been established, and now they made a point of regretting the fact that the UNSC had failed to react to Russia's initiative two weeks previously to 'strengthen' (demilitarise) the 'safe areas', as this might have prevented the market-place massacre. Their criticism concentrated instead on means used to achieve the aims, and also the process by which a decision had been reached.<sup>53</sup> One of the primary objections was the fact that Russia had been sidelined in taking the decision. For example, Yeltsin told the visiting British Prime Minister, John Major, on 15 February: 'We will not allow this problem to be resolved without Russia's participation. We will work towards having this conflict resolved at the negotiating table.'<sup>54</sup>

According to Russian diplomats, it was the United Nations – in particular, the Security Council – that should deal with these issues, not NATO. This was expressed plainly by Churkin during a one-day visit to Sarajevo on 15 February, when he was asked of his views on possible air strikes:

regardless of what they are telling us, I believe that NATO's decision goes beyond what UN Security Council resolutions stipulate. We should have taken it to the UN Security Council and then we would have had total unanimity in the international community's stance. This was feasible, since basically we are talking about the same views. We would have the UN Security Council's authority behind us. I believe that this method would have been far better.<sup>55</sup>

This assertion that there would be unanimity is misleading, however. The views were not the same, at least concerning the means required to achieve the ends. Russia rejected any declaration of an 'ultimatum' backed by the threat of force. For example, Churkin stated that NATO air strikes on Bosnian Serb positions would be an extreme measure, permissible only in an emergency situation.<sup>56</sup> A similar position was adopted by Kozyrev. Calling for co-operation rather than competition in attempting to resolve the Sarajevo siege, he again stated that air strikes could be used for the defence of UN

<sup>52</sup> Reproduced on Owen (1995a).

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Russian Federation MFA (10 February 1994).

<sup>54</sup> Kononenko (16 February 1994).

<sup>55</sup> *Croatian TV* (15 February 1994); see also comments by Kozyrev, *ITAR-TASS* (12 February 1994).

<sup>56</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (16 February 1994).



forces, but warned that the idea of air strikes 'distracts world attention from the search for a political settlement in Bosnia'.<sup>57</sup> As Vorontsov told the Security Council:

In the present circumstances, we believe that it is extremely important to concentrate our efforts on preventing further bloodshed, to refrain from any action that might fan the flames of war, and, at last, make the breakthrough to a settlement to the conflict, guided first and foremost by the logic of peace.<sup>58</sup>

The Russian view was that the threat of force undermined the peace process for Sarajevo and for Bosnia as a whole; as a result of the tendency of NATO countries to interpret the NAC declaration as an ultimatum to the Serbs, the Bosnian government side would be encouraged to continue fighting.<sup>59</sup>

### **Domestic Russian opinion**

According to Vladimir Mikheev in *Izvestiia*, opinion in Moscow was unanimous in its opposition to air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs, 'perhaps for the first time in the twenty-two months of civil war in the former Yugoslav federation'.<sup>60</sup> Grachev warned that 'if the bomb strikes are still carried out, no good will come of it'.<sup>61</sup> Egor Gaidar warned against the international community 'showing its muscles', while the *Iabloko* faction argued that NATO intended to get involved in the conflict 'beyond the bounds of its responsibility', and that this 'could lead to the disruption of the military-political equilibrium in Europe' and was 'contrary to Russia's national and state interests'.<sup>62</sup> This reflected Lukin's neo-realist approach. Lukin, in fact, went so far as to compare the market-place mortar attack to the Reichstag fire, arguing that 'it was as though it was done to order immediately prior to the foreign ministers' conference'. He also accused NATO and Western countries of 'looking for any pretext, which is unfortunately being whipped up by some of the Muslim leaders, to intervene at any price and foist their own understanding and their own solution on this matter'. If bombing did go ahead, he warned, 'it could lead to very bad consequences in terms of Russia's relations, our trust in the countries of the West'.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (12 February 1994).

<sup>58</sup> United Nations Security Council (14 February 1994), p. 42.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, comments by First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Anatolii Adamishin, in Abarinov (11 February 1994).

<sup>60</sup> Mikheev (11 February 1994).

<sup>61</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (14 February 1994).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ostankino TV* (13 February 1994).



The reaction of the ultra-nationalists was equally predictable. Zhirinovskii warned in the Duma that World War III would begin if NATO air strikes occurred.<sup>64</sup> Other deputies from the LDPR and the CPRF sought a guarantee from Lavrov (who was again representing the government in questions from the Duma) that Russia would insist on a further UNSC meeting and veto air strikes if necessary.<sup>65</sup>

Concern was not restricted to political circles; for instance, Patriarch Aleksei II issued a statement on 17 February, saying that the Russian Orthodox church had long been 'deeply troubled' by the conflict in Bosnia, and continuing:

The Patriarch urges the world community to abandon plans for armed intervention in the conflict, to renounce unilateral military support or a unilateral economic blockade of any of the parties involved, to prevent such a dangerous development of events, and to reject the very thought of bombing. It is essential to search persistently for a peaceful solution, and only a peaceful solution, to the problem.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the only voices of dissent were from a few commentators in the press (in particular, in *Izvestiia*). Maksim Iusin, for instance, wrote on 12 February that 'having gone rather far in its support for the Serbs, the Kremlin is now forced to accomplish a very difficult task: to prevent a rift with the West and save face at the same time'. He also pointed out that Russia was in isolation in its opposition to air strikes, with Greece the only European state showing solidarity with its position.<sup>67</sup> This was shown when the UNSC was convened on 14 February at the request of a group of Islamic countries and Russia (with contrary objectives); although no resolution was adopted – because of a likely Russian veto – it was expected that thirteen of the fifteen Security Council members would support the NATO decision, while China would abstain, leaving Russia isolated in its opposition.<sup>68</sup>

## **Defusion of the crisis**

According to a report by Pavel Fel'gengauer, defence correspondent of *Segodnia*, on 14 February 1994 UNPROFOR command ordered the Russian battalion in Sector East (Croatia) to send 400 troops to Bosnia; this caused a 'storm of indignation' in the MFA and the Defence Ministry, and the commander of RUSSBAT received a categorical

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<sup>64</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (16 February 1994), p. 436.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 436-9.

<sup>66</sup> *Izvestiia* (18 February 1994).

<sup>67</sup> Iusin (12 February 1994).

<sup>68</sup> Abarinov (15 February 1994).



directive not to implement any orders from the UN command to re-deploy his forces.<sup>69</sup> Churkin remarked pointedly on 16 February that as long as the West took decisions on Bosnia without Russian participation, there could be absolutely no question of using the Russian army on the territory of the conflict.<sup>70</sup> The following day, Churkin delivered Milošević and Karadžić a proposal by Yeltsin which they accepted.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Karadžić gave assurances that the Bosnian Serbs would withdraw their heavy weapons to positions twenty kilometres from Sarajevo within the time limit set in the NAC statement, while 400 Russian peace-keepers would be transferred to Sarajevo from Sector East.<sup>72</sup> Despite some concern over interpretation of the NATO demand that weapons be put under UN 'control' if not withdrawn,<sup>73</sup> this agreement allowed the crisis to be resolved without resort to air strikes. The daily shelling of Sarajevo ceased.

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<sup>69</sup> Fel'gengauer (16 February 1994). *Russia's Radio* also reported the 'order', but stated that that it was not a 'categorical order', rather, an inquiry about the possibility; *Russia's Radio* (16 February 1994).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (17 February 1994).

<sup>72</sup> Sidorov (19 February 1994). Yeltsin asked and received permission from the UN Secretary-General and the UNPROFOR commander for this re-deployment; *ITAR-TASS* (18 February 1994).

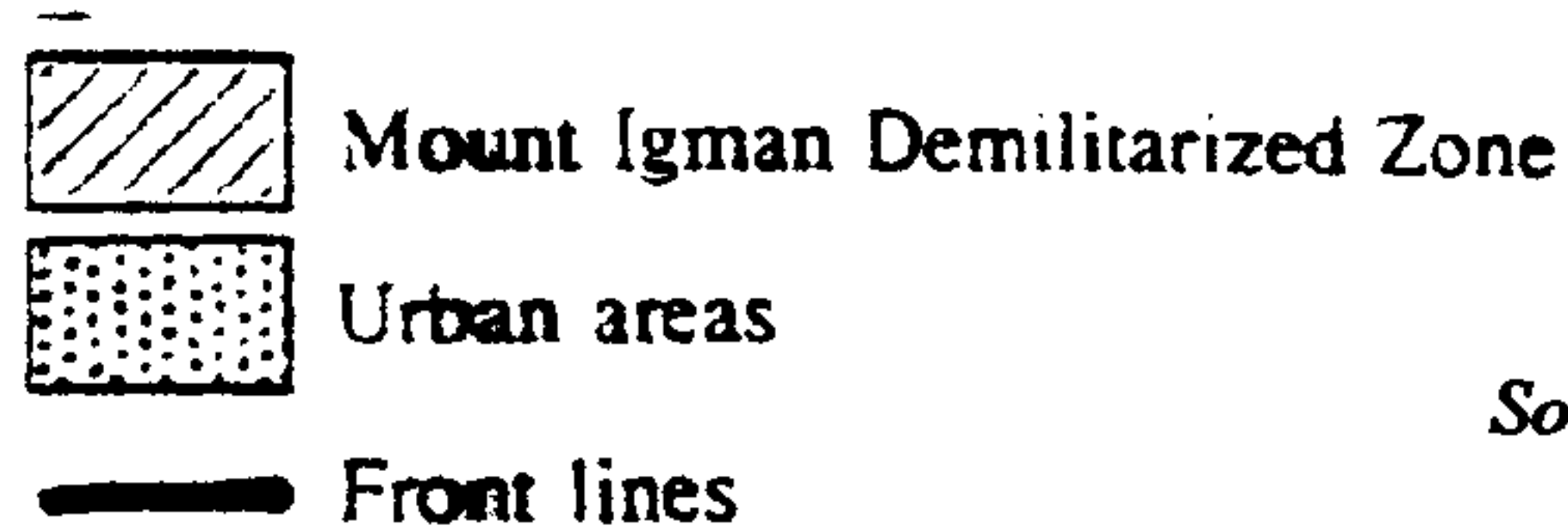
<sup>73</sup> Leurdijk (1996), pp. 43-44.



**DIAGRAM ON THIS  
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**Map 7 Sarajevo heavy weapons exclusion zone**



*Source: Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky  
(1996), p. 174*

As the crisis abated, conflicting interpretations of its resolution were expressed in Western capitals and in Moscow. Western leaders recognised the positive role played by Russia in securing the agreement of the Bosnian Serbs; nevertheless, they argued that it was the NATO threat to use force that had been decisive. For instance, the NATO Secretary-General, Manfred Wörner, referred to Russia's role, but also stated: 'We have shown that diplomacy can succeed where it is backed by credible actions'.<sup>74</sup> Similarly, on 18 February, the German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, prefaced remarks after

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44-5.



meeting Kozyrev in Athens with the statement that there could be no peace in Bosnia without Russia, and that it was imperative that Russia be included in peace talks for Bosnia, but warned against over-enthusiasm before the demands were fully met: 'The NATO ultimatum remains in force. It has evidently achieved its purpose.'<sup>75</sup> And President Clinton stressed that the desired result had been achieved thanks to NATO's decisiveness.<sup>76</sup>

Russian diplomats and commentators whole-heartedly agreed that Russia was central to any peace agreement in Bosnia, but diverged from their Western counterparts in their interpretations of what had been the decisive factor in achieving a break-through in Sarajevo. Many analysts believed that Russia had rescued NATO from a situation that it had entered without considering the consequences. For example, Mikhail Karpov reported in *Nezavisimaia gazeta* that he had learned from an interview with a 'very-high ranking diplomat' that

immediately after the NATO Council adopted the ultimatum to the Bosnian Serbs, intensive unofficial exchanges of opinion began with leading diplomats from the organisation's member-countries, exchanges in which the refrain was the idea that Russia, even though deprived of the possibility to influence the adoption of the NATO decision, nevertheless should assume the entire burden of responsibility for preventing its implementation. After adopting the ultimatum on a wave of emotions rather than through precise calculation, and soon realising the dangers of its possible consequences, the NATO countries themselves began trying to persuade Russia to do everything it could to prevent things from reaching the point of actual real bombing strikes.<sup>77</sup>

This would seem to be wishful-thinking, symptomatic of the degree to which perceptions of Russia's importance had grown to incredible levels as a result of the crisis.

Sergei Sidorov claimed that 'no matter what is said in the West about NATO's ultimatum scaring the Serbs stiff, trust played the decisive role in getting the Serbs to fulfil its terms – the trust that they have in Russia and its servicemen'.<sup>78</sup> Comments by officials suggest that the trust was mutual; Russia gained agreement by respecting and trusting the Serbs. Churkin explained the success of the Russian proposal in contrast to the NATO 'ultimatum' as follows:

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<sup>75</sup> DPA News Agency (18 February 1994).

<sup>76</sup> Nadein (23 February 1994).

<sup>77</sup> Karpov (19 February 1994).

<sup>78</sup> Sidorov (19 February 1994).



Firstly, it mentioned a request from Russia. That ... phrase, 'a request from Russia', had a powerful psychological effect...

Secondly, the letter was signed by the Russian president.

And, thirdly, it is extremely significant ... that that request was backed by the undertaking by Russia, to deploy its own contingent, within the framework of the UN's peace-keeping operation, in Sarajevo.<sup>79</sup>

This opinion was echoed by Yeltsin, who noted that, 'unlike the NATO bloc, which gave the Serbs an ultimatum, Russia had asked the Serbs to withdraw their heavy weapons ... this was in psychological terms a subtly calculated move that worked'.<sup>80</sup>

These contrasting interpretations naturally led to divergent views of the lessons for the future. While Western leaders believed that the threat of force might be used to achieve agreement in other areas, Russian diplomats drew different conclusions. For instance, asked at a briefing on 22 February whether such a 'prescription' could be used elsewhere, Karasin replied:

In my opinion, the prescription that has been worked out by the international community consists of avoiding an approach based on force, the setting of any kind of conditions, intimidating by force... I think the time has passed when forceful decisions led to any positive long-term plan. Now there is another era.<sup>81</sup>

Similarly, on 25 February the President's press secretary issued a statement sharply critical of NATO countries for, among other reasons, suggesting that 'a NATO ultimatum must be used to "impose order" at other points of the conflict' and for attempting to obscure Russia's role 'in initiating a diplomatic resolution of the conflict':

one cannot help but be alarmed by the price in human lives, the degree of risk, that the NATO command is prepared to accept in order to maintain its status...

Russia rejects the language of military ultimata and welcomes the language of diplomacy... The Russian President is convinced that the arguments of peace in Europe are more compelling than the arguments of war, and he invites the leaders of Europe and the US to end the Bosnian conflict at the negotiating table.<sup>82</sup>

After meeting representatives of Western foreign ministries on 23 February, Churkin claimed that there was full understanding on the need for a political settlement: everyone now understood that 'the Sarajevo experience' could not 'fully be transplanted

<sup>79</sup> *St. Petersburg Channel 5 TV* (20 February 1994).

<sup>80</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (23 February 1994a).

<sup>81</sup> *Russian Federation MFA* (22 February 1994).

<sup>82</sup> *Pravda* (25 February 1994).



to other regions and hot spots in Bosnia and Herzegovina'.<sup>83</sup> This appeared to reflect the hope of Russian diplomats that, after the Sarajevo crisis, a higher level of co-operation between the great powers would prevent actions from occurring that Russia opposed.

But would the Russian initiative have worked without the coercive threat of air strikes? In their detailed analysis of the establishment of the heavy weapons exclusion zone of Sarajevo, Barbara Ekwall-Uebelhart and Andrei Raevsky highlight the importance of the local cease-fire agreement of 9 February.<sup>84</sup> The ICFY negotiators had been working on a 'Sarajevo First' initiative for some months, proposing to put Sarajevo under UN administration for two years and to establish complete demilitarisation.<sup>85</sup> This was envisaged in the context of an overall settlement, but it was also hoped that an early agreement over Sarajevo might encourage progress towards peace elsewhere in Bosnia. A few hours before the NAC decision of 9 February, Lieutenant General Rose, Yasushi Akashi, and UNPROFOR's Sector Commander for Sarajevo, Lt. General Soubieru, had brokered an oral agreement for a complete cease-fire to commence on 10 February, the withdrawal of all weapons and artillery, the positioning of UNPROFOR troops at sensitive and key positions, and the establishment of a joint commission under Soubieru. This agreement was due to be put in writing the following day. It was accepted because it suited the interests of all sides. Hence, according to Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky:

At that time, already on 9 February, even *before* the North Atlantic Council decision, there was a willingness on the side of the Bosnian Serbs to remove heavy artillery from the Sarajevo area. There was no fundamental difference in the contents of this local agreement compared with the NATO ultimatum.<sup>86</sup>

Russia's initiative also contributed to the success of the initiative by allowing the Bosnian Serbs to fulfil the terms of the agreement and the NAC statement without appearing to lose face:

The intervention of Vitalii Churkin ... unblocked discussions concerning the implementation of the agreement, namely the exact meaning of "UN control" of the weapons. This clarification provided the Bosnian Serbs with much-desired security guarantees in the form of 800 [*sic*] Russian soldiers perceived to be an allied force. Of equal importance was the fact that the agreement allowed the

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<sup>83</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (23 February 1994b).

<sup>84</sup> Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky (1996), chapter 6.

<sup>85</sup> Owen (1996), chapters 6 and 7.

<sup>86</sup> Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky (1996), p. 141.



disarmament to become an honourable action and not a sign of weakness and defeat.<sup>87</sup>

Does this mean that Russian commentators were right to criticise NATO for jeopardising the progress made towards a local agreement? Not according to Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky:

it is important to stress that the Bosnian Serbs were acting according to the agreement reached between them and the Bosnian Muslims, and not in response to the NATO decision when they withdrew their heavy weapons. Undoubtedly, however, the threat of air strikes helped to ensure the parties' compliance to the creation of the weapons exclusion zone.<sup>88</sup>

It was, of course, a risky strategy. Although the NAC declaration was directed at both sides, air strikes against the Bosnian Serbs would have compromised UNPROFOR's impartiality, with implications for the peace-keepers on the ground and the delivery of humanitarian aid, which relied on this impartiality.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the threat of air strikes might be a useful tool of coercion, but the actual implementation of the threat would not necessarily promote the aim of demilitarisation. The NAC decision was helpful, but it was a dangerous game.<sup>90</sup>

No doubt, the Russian initiative was greeted with relief behind the scenes in Western capitals, as Russian newspapers implied; but that does not mean that the NATO declaration was counter-productive. In fact, it may have been crucial in getting this agreement to stick where so many others had failed. Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky conclude:

The Sarajevo disarmament operation in February 1994 was, for the most part, successful. Taking advantage of the special momentum created after the market place shelling was essential: the tide of public opinion was clearly against the war, and decision-making and implementation were done quickly and decisively. But most importantly, the disarmament operation was based upon an agreement which met the parties' mutual interests and was backed by the credible use of force.<sup>91</sup>

Bearing in mind Churkin's remarks of 15 February, would Russia have supported the credible threat of force if the decision had been adopted through the United Nations Security Council instead of the NAC? This was the opinion of some commentators, who

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<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149.



suggest that Russia's main objection was that it was not informed of the decision.<sup>92</sup> However, as I have shown, Russian diplomats gave every indication even before the 'ultimatum' that they would not countenance 'punitive' strikes or strikes aimed at coercing the sides to accept a settlement; at most, they would allow air strikes for the protection of UNPROFOR personnel. Hence, their position was that Russia should have been consulted about the NATO decision; but, had Russia been consulted, they would have refused to support the declaration. As Pavel Baev writes, in early 1994 Moscow 'unfortunately started to insist on two mutually incompatible points: that it should be consulted and that the air strikes were unacceptable as such'.<sup>93</sup>

Domestic considerations meant that Russian diplomats would never vote in the UNSC for a decision that might lead to bombing of the Bosnian Serbs. This would be the case even if, like the NATO statement, the decision was neutral, that is if impartial conditions were set for all sides to meet. Unlike in May 1992, when Russia voted for sanctions and the MFA strongly defended the decision, the administration lacked the will to expose itself to the accusations and outrage that would follow such a vote. For example, when Owen explained to Churkin after the 'ultimatum' that air power was being used 'in an impartial way to protect UN personnel and enforce the UN's role', the latter argued, according to Owen, that air strikes would 'damage Yeltsin' and there would be 'Russian volunteers and a great deal of emotion'.<sup>94</sup>

In fact, Stanislav Kondrashov in *Izvestiia* saw the Russian reaction to the NATO 'ultimatum' and the subsequent Russian initiative as a sign that, in its position on the Yugoslav question, the government now attached primary importance to domestic consensus rather than, as previously, to consensus with the West. Kondrashov welcomed this development, arguing that after the December elections, the President and the MFA could no longer ignore public opinion: 'In order to be strong, foreign policy must be based on prevailing sentiment at home.'<sup>95</sup> Churkin shared this view, interpreting the Council of the Federation's agreement to Yeltsin's proposal to send 300 additional peace-keepers to former Yugoslavia as a sign that a 'democratic consensus' was forming between the President and the parliament, a consensus that would be the

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<sup>92</sup> Vladimir Abarinov, for instance, wrote in May 1994 that 'Russia protested less about the Sarajevo ultimatum or the Gorazde air strikes [in April 1994, see chapter 7] than about the fact that it had been excluded from the decision-making'; Abarinov (1994a).

<sup>93</sup> Baev (1994a), p. 42.

<sup>94</sup> Owen (10 February 1994); Owen's view expressed in this document was that the NATO statement 'dove-tails with the negotiating strategy being pursued by Mr Akashi and Generals Cot and Rose on the one hand, and Thorvald Stoltenberg and myself on the other'.

<sup>95</sup> Kondrashov (24 February 1994).



‘bulwark of a strong foreign policy’ for Russia.<sup>96</sup> *Pravda* also suggested that ‘[w]ithout doubt ... the Kremlin could not ignore the opinion of the State Duma, in which the overwhelming majority of deputies unequivocally condemned the NATO ultimatum and demanded that the Serbs be supported’.<sup>97</sup>

### Implications of the crisis

There was also domestic consensus in relation to the larger-scale implications of the crisis, concerning Russia’s status and its position in the evolving European security structure. The Sarajevo initiative was interpreted within the élite and the press as an indication that Russia had established its status as a great power on the European and the world stage. The preponderance of this interpretation shows the ascendancy of the neo-realist outlook.

Churkin claimed that the transitional period of foreign policy was over, that the line was drawn under it in Bosnia. Russia was recovering its status a great power, and the Sarajevo initiative heralded a ‘qualitatively new stage when we are not on the sidelines’.<sup>98</sup> In his speech to the Federal Assembly on 24 February, Yeltsin hoped that the lessons would be applied to other areas of foreign policy:

Up to now, our foreign policy has been lacking in initiative and creativity. Russia’s brilliant peace-keeping initiative in the Bosnian conflict is, unfortunately, only an exception so far... We are fond of repeating that [Russia] is a great country. And that is indeed the case. So then, in our foreign-policy thinking let us always meet this high standard.<sup>99</sup>

If Russia was to be a great power, then it would have to take such initiatives and back them up with the provision of peace-keeping forces. Although this would put additional strain on Russia’s army, it was necessary if Russia was to prove its prestige. This gave Yeltsin an incentive to overcome aversion in the military to adopting a peace-keeping role in Bosnia. According to Fel’gengauer, it also showed that Yeltsin had control over the military, since no-one consulted the General Staff before the offer to the Bosnian Serbs to deploy Russian troops, and the presidential decree concerning the movement of Russian troops was implemented immediately ‘without further ado’.<sup>100</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Volkov, D. (26 February 1994); a further sign was the fact that Churkin’s personal popularity soared in Russian opinion poll surveys; Cohen (1994), p. 840.

<sup>97</sup> Bol’shakov (22 February 1994).

<sup>98</sup> Molchanovyi (16 March 1994); Cohen (1994), p. 841.

<sup>99</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (25 February 1994).

<sup>100</sup> Felgenhauer (1994a). Perhaps the military were also happy to support a high-profile gambit that would heighten Russian prestige; in addition, according to Baev, the cessation of fighting in several ‘hot spots’



There were three aspects to the concept of Russian great power interests in relation to the Yugoslav conflict that were revealed by Russian reactions to the Sarajevo crisis. Firstly, Russia had specific interests in the Balkans. This meant that the Yugoslav crisis could not be resolved without Russian participation. Hence, Kozyrev wrote:

NATO's threat to bomb Bosnian Serb positions if the siege was not lifted by a certain date was made without Russian participation. It immediately became apparent that Russia could not and should not be excluded from the common efforts to regulate the conflict in the Balkans, a region where Russia has long term interests and influence.<sup>101</sup>

Nevertheless, it was still not clear what those direct long term interests were, although there were hints that they resided in links with traditional allies. For example, Yeltsin's press secretary, Viacheslav Kostikov, claimed that the Sarajevo initiative showed to a domestic audience that Yeltsin was unarguably the leader of Russia and the protector of its national interests: 'Russians [*rossiiane*] can be fully confident that their national interests and the interests of Russia's traditional allies will be reliably defended.'<sup>102</sup>

The second aspect was perhaps more coherent. Russia was a major *European* power. The Yugoslav conflicts were occurring within this region. As Churkin put it: 'we are not only a world power but also a European country and naturally it is in our interests that there should be peace in Europe'.<sup>103</sup> International diplomacy towards the conflicts was also shaping the evolving European security structure, with implications for the position of Russia, NATO, and the CSCE within it.

The third aspect was more instrumentalist: Russia would use the Yugoslav conflict to demonstrate Russia's status as a great *world* power. The point was that no *global* problem could be solved without Russia. For example, the head of the presidential staff, Sergei Filatov, called the initiative a 'major victory of Russian diplomacy' which clearly showed that 'the adoption without Russia of major decisions on the security of the world community does not work'.<sup>104</sup> And Kostikov argued that Russia had won a vital battle for its global status, and called it a 'major Russian diplomatic victory not only on the European stage but on the world stage as well'.<sup>105</sup> In a similar vein, Churkin stated:

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in the former Soviet Union eased the deficit of troops and provided the possibility to contribute additional troops to UNPROFOR; Baev (1996a), p. 75.

<sup>101</sup> Kozyrev (1994a), pp. 65-6.

<sup>102</sup> Burmistenko (22 February 1994).

<sup>103</sup> *Ostankino TV* (6 March 1994).

<sup>104</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (21 February 1994).

<sup>105</sup> Burmistenko (22 February 1994).



the world community is interested in our participation, because a wide base is needed for the settlement of a crisis that is, in essence, global from the point of view of its political ramifications. And a wide base is impossible without Russia.<sup>106</sup>

As a global power, Russia should have a role in conflict resolution throughout the world. Russian policy-makers and commentators used the Sarajevo crisis to prove that Russia must be involved in the handling of other major crises. As Kostikov put it, 'President Yeltsin believes that Russia should and will participate in the resolution of all major international problems. It will not allow itself to be discriminated against.'<sup>107</sup> One immediate example was renewed activity by Russian diplomats in the Middle East peace process, culminating in the visit by Kozyrev to the region in March 1994. Kozyrev insisted that Russian participation was essential for the success of the Arab-Israeli peace process.<sup>108</sup>

The domestic consensus behind this assertive shift in foreign policy was evident in media reactions. Stanislav Kondrashov in *Izvestiia* was delighted with the new line, expressing thereby many features of the neo-realist position that was now part of the official policy:

And Russia? At a critical moment its new partners seemed to have taken it for a non-entity, but with one step it put itself at the centre of attention. It was at that moment that Russia found the important place that it alone can occupy and played the role that no one else could have played. Bravo! ... it is impossible not to admire the skills of our diplomats, those who brilliantly prepared the move behind the scenes while giving the credit to the Russian President, who sealed the initiative with his consent and signature.

Such obvious successes in the search for our place and identity are very rare, and so we are doubly pleased that realism combined with dignity is gaining the upper hand and foreign policy romanticism is retreating just as its colleague – market romanticism – has done. They exhibited similar features, incidentally – an infatuation with Western prescriptions to the point of losing a sense of measure, as well as our own identity.

In the case of Yugoslavia, that loss occurred when Russia joined the economic blockade of Serbia, forgetting that history looks different when viewed from Moscow, Washington and Bonn, and that it would be the Russians, not the

<sup>106</sup> Russian Federation MFA (24 March 1994), p. 27.

<sup>107</sup> *Pravda* (25 February 1994).

<sup>108</sup> *Ostankino TV* (1 March 1994).



Americans or the Germans, who would have to take harsh measures against a kindred people.<sup>109</sup>

Even *Pravda* gave 'due credit to President B. Yeltsin, the State Duma and all those who prevented reprisals against the Serbs', claiming that

it is time for Russia to pursue its own policy, a policy that would be in its national interests, and would not be one hundred per cent subordinate to the interests of the US and the NATO block. We have come to our senses, though belatedly!<sup>110</sup>

Nevertheless, the government was not prepared to adopt the kind of openly pro-Serb and anti-Western policy that some opposition politicians and press demanded.<sup>111</sup> Policy makers did not want the development of a situation in which the great powers supported their various 'proxies' in the conflict. And it was still hoped that Russia could co-operate with the West as partners. Kozyrev claimed in relation to the Sarajevo crisis:

Ultimately the advantages of partnership were illustrated when Russia and the West co-ordinated their efforts to persuade the warring parties to make peace. But the initial lack of consultation and co-ordination meant that first both sides had to run the risk of returning to the old benefactor-client relationship that had played such a pernicious role in the regional conflicts of the Cold War era.<sup>112</sup>

Hence, although Russia still sought 'partnership' with the West, it must be an *equal* partnership based on real co-operation, rather than a *diktat* in which Russia was merely the junior partner:

The majority of Russian political forces wants a strong, independent and prosperous Russia. From this fundamental fact it follows that the only policy with any chance of success is one that recognises the equal rights and mutual benefit of partnership for both Russia and the West, as well as the status and significance of Russia as a world power.<sup>113</sup>

Kozyrev applied this specifically to the Bosnia conflict:

If a partnership is built on mutual trust, then it is natural to recognise other rules as well: the need not only to inform one another of decisions made, but also to agree on approaches beforehand. It would be hard to accept an interpretation of partnership in which one side demands that the other co-ordinate its every step with

<sup>109</sup> Kondrashov (24 February 1994).

<sup>110</sup> Bol'shakov (22 February 1994).

<sup>111</sup> For an example of a more virulently anti-American diatribe, see Bol'shakov (2 March 1994).

<sup>112</sup> Kozyrev (1994a), p. 66.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.



it while the former retains complete freedom for itself. Partners must have mutual respect for each other's interests and concerns.

This is a key lesson from the decision-making process that led to the lifting of the siege in Sarajevo in February.<sup>114</sup>

In order to develop such a partnership, decisions had to be taken not by NATO, but by institutions in which Russia played a leading role. These institutions should be strengthened or created in order to reduce NATO's ability to act independently. On 23 February in a speech in Krakow, Kozyrev announced what he called the 'new Russian concept' of European security: transforming the North Atlantic Co-operation Council (NACC) into an independent structure of military-political co-operation, an independent 'peace-keeping laboratory', but one closely linked to the CSCE. The CSCE would be assigned the role of co-ordinator of the efforts of NATO, the European Union, the Council of Europe, the Western European Union, and the CIS in the areas of strengthening security and stability, peace-keeping, and protecting the rights of national minorities in Europe.<sup>115</sup>

Other policy makers pursued different routes to secure Russian participation. According to Yeltsin, 'attempts by a number of leaders to keep Russia out of addressing issues of international security are discrimination against Russia, which should and will take part in all major international events as a member of the Security Council'.<sup>116</sup> As well as using the UNSC, Yeltsin proposed that the leaders of Russia, the USA, Britain, France, and Germany gather in Moscow, Geneva, or another capital in order 'to sign a document which would be of historic importance and would put an end to the bloodshed in Yugoslavia'.<sup>117</sup>

Western states also hoped to avoid a split with Russia and recognised, after the Sarajevo crisis, that it must be more involved in the mediation process. With the United States also becoming more active, this encouraged the establishment of the Contact Group to provide a forum for great power co-operation. These developments were to have a significant impact on the mediation process.

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66.

<sup>115</sup> Grudinina (25 February 1994).

<sup>116</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (23 February 1994a).

<sup>117</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (23 February 1994c).



## **Chapter 7**

### **The great power concert, March 1994 – May 1995**

The Sarajevo crisis demonstrated the dominance of neo-realist thinking in the Russian foreign policy establishment, particularly the emphasis on Russia's great power status and the necessity of Russian involvement in conflict resolution in the Balkans. The diplomatic 'triumph' appeared to prove that Russia was a great power that must be involved in mediation efforts if they were to bring about an end to the war. Western powers, while insisting on the importance of the NATO declaration in establishing the Sarajevo exclusion zone, recognised the dangers of excluding Russia from decision making and agreed that closer great power co-operation was desirable. Consequently, Russia became more involved in the mediation efforts, particularly through the Contact Group. From the Russian point of view, this was a reflection of its status, but participation also served other policy goals. In particular, it enabled Russia to avert any actions that it deemed to be against its interests or that might be considered anti-Serb and that would be attacked by domestic political forces. This contributed to the failure of the major powers to achieve an end to the conflict.

One other aspect of Russian interests developed increasing significance in this period: Russia sought to gain a firmer presence in the Balkans through military and economic links with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Yeltsin administration was not, however, prepared to risk open confrontation with the West by abrogating sanctions unilaterally or by offering the Serbs military support, despite pressure from the Duma; economic and military agreements were signed, but they would come into effect only after formal suspension of sanctions by the UNSC.

### **The formation of the great power concert**

#### **Initial moves**

After the Sarajevo crisis, both Russia and the United States became involved more directly in the mediation process. The US brought to fruition the plan to end the Muslim-Croat conflict and create a Muslim-Croat federation that it had been working on since the previous August. The agreement was officially signed in Washington on 2 March 1994. It was greeted by Churkin as an important step on the path of peace negotiations which could 'play a positive role in resolving the political crisis'.<sup>1</sup> Churkin was also satisfied that he had been kept informed by his American counterpart, envoy

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<sup>1</sup> Erlikh (4 March 1994).



Charles Redman, throughout the progress of the negotiations.<sup>2</sup> After talks with Bosnian Prime Minister, Haris Silajdžić, and the Croatian Foreign Minister, Mate Granić, Kozyrev also expressed support for the plan, although he warned that it was important to achieve an understanding with the Bosnian Serbs who must not be excluded from a final settlement.<sup>3</sup>

The Russian reaction to this American initiative was, therefore, guarded but positive. At the same time that the agreement was reached in Washington, Russian diplomats themselves achieved another breakthrough. After talks in Moscow between Kozyrev and Karadžić, the MFA announced that an accord had been reached on unblocking the airport in Tuzla, which would enable the delivery of humanitarian cargoes to be resumed.<sup>4</sup> It had seemed possible that NATO might again resort to air strikes to break the blockade, but '[a]s in the case of Sarajevo, Moscow stepped in to mediate', and achieved 'another success'.<sup>5</sup> According to Karadžić, it was Russia's willingness to send observers to monitor shipments that was decisive: 'We trust the Russians' impartiality. Their presence will guarantee that the Muslims will not receive arms instead of food.'<sup>6</sup> Churkin announced on 24 March that the first UN flight had landed at Tuzla airport two days previously and that Russian observers were present as had been agreed; he added that the humanitarian situation in Tuzla had 'improved significantly' as a result of the agreement.<sup>7</sup>

Russian diplomats achieved what they believed to be another significant success in Zagreb on 29 March when, after talks conducted by Churkin at the Russian embassy, a cease-fire agreement was signed between the government of Croatia and the Krajina Serbs which re-established the collapsed cease-fire of February 1992. Russian diplomats repeatedly emphasised the importance of the Krajina issue; Churkin argued that it was impossible to resolve the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina without resolving the Croatia-Krajina problem,<sup>8</sup> while Karasin stressed the importance of Serb-Croat relations in progress towards a settlement of the whole Yugoslav crisis.<sup>9</sup> According to Churkin, the document offered every reason to assert that the threat of an armed conflict between the Serbs and the Croats had been 'reduced to zero'.<sup>10</sup> Although he saw the agreement as a

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<sup>2</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (2 March 1994).

<sup>3</sup> *NTV* (9 March 1994).

<sup>4</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (1 March 1994).

<sup>5</sup> *Iusin* (3 March 1994).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Russian Federation MFA* (24 March 1994).

<sup>8</sup> *Tanjug* (16 March 1994).

<sup>9</sup> *Russian Federation MFA* (22 March 1994).

<sup>10</sup> *Shchedrunova* (31 March 1994).



‘major victory for Russian diplomacy’, Churkin was careful to point out that a sizeable role was played also by the United States, the European Union, and the United Nations, including the co-chairmen of the ICFY.<sup>11</sup> Shchedrunova reported Churkin as stating that

[a]lthough Russia initiated and organised the meeting and subsequently invited the other participants, only full co-ordination of the actions of all the mediators made it possible to get an agreement signed... American and Russian diplomats, who have often talked in the past about their coinciding views on the Balkan conflict, had, for the first time, demonstrated this unanimity in actual practice.<sup>12</sup>

Churkin’s final conclusion was equally significant: that the experience of the Zagreb talks could also be used for Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>13</sup> This reflected the hope after the Sarajevo crisis that divisions between the great powers could be overcome and a common approach achieved that would lead to a peace settlement for Bosnia, with the active involvement of Russia and the United States. As Churkin declared on 24 March, ‘an unprecedented level of unity of approaches of the international community towards the problem of a Yugoslav settlement has now been achieved. In the first place, I have in mind the level of co-operation reached between Russia, the US and the EU.’<sup>14</sup> Co-operating closely with Redman, Churkin hoped to achieve a cease-fire in Bosnia as a whole, and a settlement based on the EU plan, with concomitant lifting of sanctions. Churkin explained later:

The big goal for me when I returned to Belgrade in early April was to try to arrange, not just a cease-fire, but a complete cessation of hostilities, something along the lines of what had been achieved in Croatia, the cessation of hostilities and the inter-positioning of UN troops. I think we really did have a chance.<sup>15</sup>

Unfortunately, a new crisis was developing that jeopardised this progress. The Goražde crisis initially threatened not only the imminent achievement of a peace agreement, but also the new spirit of co-operation. As it developed, however, it actually strengthened great power concordance, but the impetus towards a settlement had been lost.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*; and Russian Federation MFA (24 March 1994), p. 26.

<sup>12</sup> Shchedrunova (31 March 1994).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Russian Federation MFA (24 March 1994), p. 25.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Silber and Little (1996), p. 324.



## The Goražde crisis

Goražde was one of the six UN-designated 'safe areas'. In the first week of April 1994, Serb forces besieging the city began to close in. The commander of UNPROFOR, General Rose, initially played down the crisis, but the Serb bombardment and advance sharply escalated after 7 April. UN military representatives and UNHCR representatives in the town reported that the situation was 'very serious'. When the Bosnian Serb commander, Ratko Mladić, ignored warnings by Rose to stop the attacks or face NATO action, Rose obtained approval from Yasushi Akashi, the UN Secretary-General's special envoy, and ordered an air attack by two US Air Force planes on a Serb artillery command bunker on 10 April. The following day, Rose ordered a second wave of air strikes, on a group of tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers that had been firing on Goražde. NATO justified the action by referring to UNSCR 836.<sup>16</sup>

This was the first attack by NATO on ground targets in its history. Its first military action had taken place on 28 February 1994, when NATO planes had intercepted and brought down four Serb planes that were violating the no-fly zone. On that occasion, the Russian MFA recognised that the action was in line with UNSC resolutions and the mandate given to NATO to implement the no-fly zone. A statement released by the MFA stated:

Any side that carried out a military flight over Bosnia in violation of corresponding resolutions of the UNSC about the no-fly zone itself bears full responsibility for the consequences.<sup>17</sup>

The reaction to the air strikes around Goražde was more critical, although not as strong as that to the NATO ultimatum over Sarajevo. This was because, in contrast to the Sarajevo declaration, the Goražde strikes were in line with existing UNSC resolutions on deterring attacks on 'safe areas' and were not linked to an ultimatum to achieve additional aims, but Russian officials believed that matters were not as clear-cut as they were in the case of the strikes of 28 February.

Firstly, Russia claimed that the crisis had begun with 'provocative actions' by Muslim forces, which had led to an 'inappropriate' response from Serb forces.<sup>18</sup> The MFA declared that violations of UNSC resolutions establishing the 'safe areas' were

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 363-4.

<sup>17</sup> Russian Federation MFA (28 February 1994).

<sup>18</sup> Russian Federation MFA (13 April 1994). According to Silber and Little, government forces regularly launched raids from within the enclave, but Mladić launched an offensive to tighten the Serb grip on the town (without necessarily capturing it) in order to secure Goražde in advance of an overall peace settlement; Silber and Little (1996), pp. 324-6.



unacceptable, but the international community must not 'indulge Muslim provocations'.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, as with the Sarajevo declaration, Russian officials objected to the fact that Russia had not been consulted before the air strikes, and was only informed after the event. Karasin argued that protection of 'blue helmets' was not an empty question for Russia since Russian peace-keeping forces were also present in Bosnia, and declared that Moscow would not 'resign itself to the role of junior partner, which is informed only in those cases when it is expected to say "yes"'.<sup>20</sup> Russian diplomats insisted on the unconditional observation of the approval procedure for air support as affirmed by the UNSC; again they demanded consultation with the permanent members of the Security Council prior to any strikes, arguing that Akashi did not have the authority to approve such actions.<sup>21</sup> Thirdly, Russian diplomats claimed that the air strikes had aggravated the military-political situation and had created the danger of escalation; they warned against Western leaders 'gambling on force in Bosnian as well as in general world affairs'.<sup>22</sup> Russia demanded that the UN Secretary-General prepare a full report on the mechanism used to make the decision on the use of air strikes and on the results of the strikes, including data about the targets hit, the number of victims, and an evaluation of the implications of the strikes for the UN peace-keeping operation in Bosnia and the supply of humanitarian aid.<sup>23</sup>

The Goražde crisis, like the Sarajevo crisis before it, had wider implications for NATO-Russian relations. Although Yeltsin claimed that Russia was making no direct linkage between events in Bosnia and the Partnership for Peace programme, he added that Russia was not 'hurrying to sign'.<sup>24</sup> Kozyrev also hinted that the decision to postpone signing the programme was linked to events in Bosnia:

We are interested in much more serious relations with NATO, than simply a framework document, so that surprises and unilateral measures, especially military ones, are ruled out in those areas where we must co-operate very closely.<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, the subsequent failure of Russian efforts to achieve an agreement in Goražde similar to that achieved in Sarajevo actually encouraged closer co-operation

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<sup>19</sup> Russian Federation MFA (11 April 1994).

<sup>20</sup> Iusin (13 April 1994).

<sup>21</sup> Russian Federation MFA (14 April 1994). The NATO Secretary-General, Manfred Wörner, answering these criticisms, argued that preliminary consultations with Moscow would have taken too much time, which would have made it impossible to accomplish the main objective of protecting the UN personnel threatened by Serb guns; Iusin (13 April 1994).

<sup>22</sup> Russian Federation MFA (13 April 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Russian Federation MFA (11 April 1994), (13 April 1994), (14 April 1994).

<sup>24</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti* (13 April 1994).

<sup>25</sup> Grudinina (15 April 1994).



with the West. This failure was due to the actions of the Bosnian Serbs. After the first air strikes, Churkin went to Pale hoping to get an agreement that would avert the need for further NATO action. On 16 April, the Serbs announced that they had captured the strategic heights around Goražde, and their attack continued. NATO aircraft again prepared to undertake air strikes after Rose requested close air support, but bad weather and the shooting down of a British plane caused the mission to be abandoned. Concerned at potential escalation, Churkin met the most senior Bosnian Serb 'official' in Pale at that time, Momčilo Krajišnik, speaker in the Bosnian Serb 'parliament'. Krajišnik promised to stop the shelling of Goražde, to pull back Serb forces to a distance of three kilometres from the town centre, and to release the 150 UN personnel who had been taken hostage after the first air strikes. The agreement was due to take immediate effect, and talks would resume in the morning. As a result, Akashi agreed to call off the air strikes.<sup>26</sup>

But the Bosnian Serbs made no attempt to honour the agreement, as Churkin himself explained:

They gave me this promise of three things they would do. [But] they had not released anybody. They had not pulled back a single inch from where they were standing. And the shelling continued.

Karadžić was procrastinating. After about two or three hours, it became clear to me that for reasons of his own he didn't want to come to any kind of agreement. So I told him of the opportunity to have sanctions lifted and I walked out of the meeting.

Churkin later told journalists that he had heard more broken promises in one weekend than he had heard all his life.<sup>27</sup>

Russia's leaders strongly condemned the way that the Bosnian Serbs had broken their promises. President Yeltsin said that, despite Russian efforts, 'it has not proved possible to avoid the escalation of military action. The Bosnian Serbs do not keep their word.'<sup>28</sup> Kozyrev 'resolutely recommended' the Serb side 'not to test the patience of the world community'.<sup>29</sup> But the strongest reactions came from Churkin, who felt personally slighted and experienced the contrast with the Sarajevo 'triumph' most acutely. He believed that Russia, as a great power, had been insulted by the Bosnian Serbs who had used it to achieve their own aims. As he put it, 'the tail shouldn't wag the

<sup>26</sup> Silber and Little (1996), pp. 329-31.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 367-8.

<sup>28</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (19 April 1994a).

<sup>29</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (19 April 1994b).



dog. It's really quite simple ... we have our own interests and our own positions, too.'<sup>30</sup> He urged Russian authorities to break off all contacts with the Bosnian Serbs who had 'used Moscow's mediation as a cover and simply played for time':

The Bosnian Serbs must understand that in Russia they are dealing with a great power, not a banana republic. Russia must decide whether a group of extremists can be allowed to use a great country's policy to achieve its own aims. Our answer is unequivocal: "never".<sup>31</sup>

Some Russian commentators went further, arguing that previous Russian diplomacy had encouraged the Bosnian Serbs to continue actions against the 'safe areas'. For example, Leonid Mlechin wrote in *Izvestiia*:

Moscow is promising to prevent any NATO action, believing that such an action would lead to a major war.

Isn't it worth considering that Russia's diplomatic success in Sarajevo two months ago may have been one of the causes of the present catastrophe in Bosnia?

When Russia thwarted the NATO ultimatum issued to the Serbs blockading Sarajevo, the Serb leaders decided that they had finally succeeded in causing a clash between Russia and the West, and that Moscow would never allow NATO to bomb their positions and would, in general, protect them. Filled with this confidence, the Serbs attacked Goražde.<sup>32</sup>

Other commentators, however, continued to support the Bosnian Serbs and strongly opposed action by NATO and the West. In *Rossiiskaia gazeta*, Vladimir Kuznechevskii noticed that the situation in Bosnia had changed drastically as a result of the events around Goražde, where, as a result of the 'military provocation' by the Muslims and after 'the support of this provocation by NATO military aircraft', the Serbs 'stopped restraining themselves'.<sup>33</sup> And Evgenii Fadeev, in *Pravda*, concentrated his attack on Churkin, who '[c]ompletely unexpectedly ... harshly and inappropriately condemned the Serb side in Bosnia'.<sup>34</sup>

There appeared also to be differences within the administration. For example, the Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev, stated: 'I do not entirely agree with Vitalii Churkin, it would be wrong to put all the blame for the truce violations and the air strikes on the

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<sup>30</sup> *Russia TV* (20 April 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Iudin (20 April 1994).

<sup>32</sup> Mlechin (23 April 1994).

<sup>33</sup> Kuznechevskii (19 April 1994).

<sup>34</sup> Fadeev (20 April 1994).



Bosnian Serbs... The situation in the Goražde region is confused – both sides are guilty.’<sup>35</sup>

Reports suggested that the MFA accepted Churkin’s view that further contacts with the Bosnian Serb leadership would be pointless.<sup>36</sup> Immediately following Churkin’s return from Bosnia, the MFA prepared the text of a presidential statement on Bosnia, which, according to sources in the Ministry, asserted that the Bosnian Serb leadership was taking a deliberately un-constructive position with the aim of destroying the Muslim enclaves; that Russia’s reserves of goodwill had run out and it saw no sense in continuing its mediation efforts; and that the world community could not reconcile itself to open aggression and genocide. Instead, peace must be enforced.<sup>37</sup> But the text was softened significantly in tone. According to Vladimir Abarinov, this was because Yeltsin ‘did not want an early confrontation with the Duma over what is, from his point of view, a secondary issue’. Furthermore, Yeltsin had protested against military intervention in Bosnia too often to support it now.<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, the final statement still displayed a change of emphasis in Russian rhetoric:

The conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina stands on the threshold of a dangerous escalation, despite Russia’s energetic diplomatic efforts in conjunction with the UN and other members of the international community. The Bosnian Serb leadership must fulfil the commitments it made to Russia to stop the attacks and withdraw from the town of Goražde, a UN-declared ‘safe area’, to guarantee conditions for the introduction of UN forces, and release UN personnel in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The world community must take decisive measures for a political resolution of the Bosnian crisis.

In this context, I re-affirm my proposal for a meeting at the highest level of Russia, the USA, the EU, with the participation of the UN.<sup>39</sup>

These points were repeated in subsequent statements by Russian diplomats. While condemning Serb action, Russia continued to oppose the use of air strikes which contained ‘an inherent danger of escalation’, and of NATO being drawn in to the conflict and usurping the primacy of the UNSC.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Fel’gengauer (21 April 1994).

<sup>36</sup> Iusin (21 April 1994).

<sup>37</sup> Abarinov (1994a); see also Iusin (21 April 1994).

<sup>38</sup> Abarinov (1994a).

<sup>39</sup> Russian Federation MFA (19 April 1994).

<sup>40</sup> Speech by Vorontsov, United Nations Security Council (21 April 1994), p. 53.



## Formation of the Contact Group

After the humiliation of Goražde, Russian policy makers believed that it was in Russia's interest to seek a common position with other 'great powers' rather than to allow actions by the conflicting sides in Bosnia to create divisions between them. Therefore, they again aimed to achieve an international consensus and hoped that Yeltsin's appeal for a summit meeting would achieve this. As Iulii Vorontsov told the UN Security Council:

Today, as never before, the time is ripe for these participants to work together to hammer out a political approach for a solution to the Bosnian problem and to put it before the belligerent parties, so that they are absolutely clear that it is essential to negotiate, and not just go from one crisis to another.<sup>41</sup>

Western leaders finally responded to Russian appeals for such a meeting. This was partly a result of the (temporary) resolution of the Goražde crisis. The Bosnian Serbs complied with a NATO ultimatum which warned them that they would face further air strikes unless they respected an immediate cease-fire, withdrew troops to three kilometres from the town centre, and withdrew heavy weaponry to a distance of twenty kilometres.<sup>42</sup> Russian diplomats' reactions to this ultimatum were considerably less hostile than to previous NATO actions because of their disillusionment with the Bosnian Serbs. As a statement by the MFA expressed it, the UNSC (including Russia) 'recognised the adequacy of NATO's decisions, which were taken in response to a request by the UN secretary-general for the defence of Goražde'.<sup>43</sup> Kozyrev also stated that '[r]egrettably, last week the Bosnian Serbs left the UN secretary-general no other choice but to ask the North Atlantic Treaty for air support'; but a plan for 'wide-ranging strikes, whereby NATO was to enter the war on the side of the Muslims' was rejected after Russia insisted on the UNSC meeting.<sup>44</sup>

Hence, in this case, Russia supported 'close air support' to deter an attack on the 'safe area'. Russian diplomats would not, however, support wider NATO action, and in this they were supported by General Rose, and some members of NATO – in particular, the United Kingdom – that were concerned about the implications of NATO action for the UNPROFOR operation. As well as making Russia more conducive to the use of 'air support' to protect 'safe areas', the Goražde crisis brought into the open serious

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Silber and Little (1996), pp. 332-4.

<sup>43</sup> Russian Federation MFA (25 April 1994).

<sup>44</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (27 April 1994).



divisions within NATO, a development that made NATO less likely to propose large scale air strikes in the near future.<sup>45</sup>

There was therefore a possibility of closer co-operation between Russia and the West. This enabled the West to respond to Russia's appeals for co-ordination, and the Contact Group – consisting of Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany – was established on 26 April. Vorontsov greeted this as 'an important step' in the direction of creating an active joint effort, and called for an early summit meeting on a settlement in Bosnia-Herzegovina,<sup>46</sup> while Kozyrev claimed on 27 April that 'the partnership [was] working' and argued that it was important to create a 'united international front and put pressure on all sides'.<sup>47</sup>

The process leading towards this 'great power' convergence is summarised by Konstantin Eggert in *Izvestiia*:

The upswings and failures of recent months seem to have sobered both Russia and the West. The Kremlin was subjected to shameful humiliation by the Serbs, while Europe and the US showed confusion and ineffectiveness in using military force. The spirit of defeat brought Moscow and the Western capitals closer together, forcing them, on the one hand, to engage in what might be called 'mutual face saving', and, on the other hand, to try through a joint onslaught to move the Bosnian problem from standstill.<sup>48</sup>

There were, of course, still major differences between the positions of the major powers: between Russia and the West, and also between the individual Western states, particularly the US and the European powers. It was likely that another attack on a 'safe area' or the failure to achieve a break-through in the mediation process would bring these differences into the open. For the moment, though, the leaderships of the major powers perceived to have interests in the region considered the development of a common policy to be in their interests, and used the Contact Group as a form of great power 'concert' through which they sought a consensual approach to the conflicts which, they hoped, would prevent events in former Yugoslavia from exacerbating tensions between them. After Goražde, the Russian administration was not prepared to risk a split with the West for the sake of the Bosnian Serbs who had humiliated them, while the Clinton administration was wary of opening the divisions within NATO and still attached great importance to relations with Russia and the Yeltsin administration.

<sup>45</sup> Silber and Little (1996), p. 334.

<sup>46</sup> United Nations Security Council (27 April 1994), p. 26.

<sup>47</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (27 April 1994).

<sup>48</sup> Eggert (30 April 1994).



The result, however, was a policy of the 'lowest common denominator', as the major powers, through the Contact Group, avoided any decisions over which consensus could not be reached.

## **Great power diplomacy, May 1994 – May 1995**

The Contact Group took over responsibility from the ICFY for devising a peace settlement to end the Bosnian conflict. Consensus was fragile, and there were major disputes behind the façade of unity. In a sense, there was a 'tug of war' between the US and Russia for support of the Western European powers. Russia attempted to use the notion of European interests to gather support against certain US proposals, while the US attempted to use links through NATO. Any attempts to strengthen NATO's role were resisted by Russia, which still insisted on the primacy of the UNSC. Hence, while on one level the great powers conducted negotiations through the Contact Group, the debate over the role of NATO, the status of UNPROFOR, and the use of force, continued.

### **NATO, UNPROFOR, and the use of force**

In certain circumstances, Russia fully supported the use of force by the international community: in the case of violation of the no-fly zone (as shown in February 1994) or a direct attack on UN peace-keepers. For example, when French peace-keepers came under attack on 22 September 1994 and NATO carried out air strikes against a Bosnian Serb tank, the MFA issued a statement declaring that '[a]ny side attacking the peacekeepers should be mindful of the possibly grave consequences',<sup>49</sup> while Kozyrev stated that 'peacekeepers should be protected by all means at the disposal of the world community'.<sup>50</sup> Reaction to a NATO attack on Bosnian Serb positions around Sarajevo on 5 August was also muted because there had been a clear violation of the Sarajevo exclusion zone when Bosnian Serb forces had taken artillery weapons from a storage site near Ilidža controlled by UNPROFOR. An MFA declaration stated that the Bosnian Serbs 'must not allow a repetition of such provocative actions' which complicated efforts to achieve a political settlement.<sup>51</sup> The Russian response to the use of NATO air power in November 1994 was, however, similar to its reaction to the Goražde crisis. When NATO carried out air strikes on the Udbina air strip in Krajina after an aerial bombing attack on Bihać by Krajina Serb aircraft, Russia condemned both 'Muslim

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<sup>49</sup> *Radio Russia* (23 September 1994).

<sup>50</sup> *UNIAN News Agency* (23 September 1994).

<sup>51</sup> Russian Federation MFA (9 August 1994).



provocations' and 'Serb over-reaction', recognised the legitimacy of air strikes, but warned against escalation.<sup>52</sup> This reflected an interweaving of concerns about the status of the 'safe areas', the role of NATO, and the overall shape of the international system.

Russia continued to express concern about the use of the 'safe areas' by government forces to launch attacks on Bosnian Serb forces; according to Karasin, the initial cause of the Bihać crisis was attacks by Bosnian government forces on Serb positions which had led to a counter-strike.<sup>53</sup> Russia initiated UNSCR 959 of 19 November 1994 which called on all sides to show restraint around the 'safe areas' and to allow UNPROFOR to fulfil its functions. The resolution also called for an investigation by the UN Secretary-General into means to strengthen the 'safe areas'. In this report of 1 December, Boutros-Ghali favoured full demilitarisation of the 'safe areas', but he recognised that with the 'light option' of 7,600 troops, UNPROFOR could not oversee adequately the weapons collection sites nor prevent the forceful withdrawal of weapons. Furthermore, without additional troops to guarantee their security, the 'safe areas' would be vulnerable to attack.<sup>54</sup>

In these circumstances, by proposing full demilitarisation, Russia seemed more intent on preventing action by Bosnian government forces from within the 'safe areas' than achieving the full protection of those areas. Speaking in the UNSC, Sergei Lavrov – who became Russia's permanent representative to the Security Council in July 1994 – argued that

the main purpose of these areas is to protect the civilian population, not to protect the territory let alone the troops of one of the parties to the conflict. The role of UNPROFOR in the protection of the safe areas consists primarily in assisting humanitarian aid operations and also in contributing to a comprehensive peace process by bringing about agreements on a cease-fire and the separation of forces.<sup>55</sup>

Unfortunately, he failed to explain how the 'safe areas' were supposed to be 'safe' for the population if the territory in which it lived was not protected. And the second sentence is also not justified if we look at UNSCR 836 (see chapter 5).

Russia's second concern was that NATO was becoming more involved on the Bosnian government side, thus undermining the principle of international impartiality and casting into doubt the supremacy of the UN. After the NATO strike on Udbina

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<sup>52</sup> Russian Federation MFA (22 November 1994).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Leurdijk (1996), pp. 59-62.

<sup>55</sup> United Nations Security Council (19 November 1994), p. 4. Karasin made the same argument earlier in the year; Russian Federation MFA (17 May 1994).



airstrip, Moscow demanded the immediate convening of the UNSC, at which session the Russian representative expressed the view that the use of air power ought strictly to correspond to the 'letter and spirit' of UNSC decisions, should be proportionate and not lead to escalation.<sup>56</sup> When NATO planes carried out several strikes over the following days in response to missile attacks against NATO aircraft, it aroused further concern in Moscow. Karasin warned that 'the danger of a chain reaction of power methods is already clear and, according to our conviction, they can result in nothing but a continuation of the bloodshed'.<sup>57</sup> And *ITAR-TASS* quoted a senior MFA diplomat who claimed that the international community was 'gradually sliding toward supporting militarily only one of the parties involved in the conflict'.<sup>58</sup>

These developments led Kozyrev to write a frank letter to Boutros-Ghali on 25 November, in which he warned against NATO becoming a party to the conflict and UNPROFOR losing its impartiality:

The situation in and around Bosnia is growing increasingly alarming. Despite the efforts of recent days, especially of the UN Security Council, hostilities are continuing to escalate...

Unfortunately, a number of Security Council resolutions are not being fully implemented or are being implemented in such a way that gives grounds for accusations of partiality...

The purpose of the establishment of the UN 'safe areas' is to protect the civilian population, and the defence of these areas by UNPROFOR should not make it one of the sides in the conflict.

NATO actions should be limited to the support of UNPROFOR as it fulfils its mandate in strict conformity with Security Council resolutions.

All forceful actions should be carried out on the basis of the principles of proportionality, impartiality, and timeliness...

In our view, there is a real danger of UNPROFOR exceeding its tasks and being drawn into the fighting, which creates the impression of the UN forces supporting one of the sides in the conflict.

He concluded by asking the Secretary-General to 'pay serious attention to the above circumstances in order to prevent *de facto* changes in UNPROFOR's mandate, which could lead to further escalation of the conflict'.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Russian Federation MFA (22 November 1994).

<sup>57</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (23 November 1994a).

<sup>58</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (23 November 1994b).

<sup>59</sup> Russian Federation MFA (25 November 1994).



It is difficult to see how UNPROFOR could fulfil its mandate without appearing 'partial', for the simple reason that the 'safe areas' were being besieged by one side, the Bosnian Serbs. Action to protect the 'safe areas' in line with Security Council resolutions would therefore inevitably be directed against that one side. This was a consequence of the 'safe areas' concept as laid out in Security Council resolutions, and also the nature of the war (as I shall discuss in more detail in the conclusion).

Several factors prompted Kozyrev to make this statement at that time, in addition to the worsening of the conflict and the repeated instances of NATO action. Firstly, from October, there had been talks between NATO and the UN secretariat on proposals by certain NATO members aimed at simplifying the procedure for authorisation of the use of air power.<sup>60</sup> Kozyrev stated on 30 October that he had a clear mutual understanding with Boutros-Ghali that abolishing the 'dual key' system was out of the question; but he warned that if the 'dual key' was weakened significantly, if NATO was given a decisive say, then Russia would withdraw its troops since it would 'no longer be a UN operation but a NATO operation'.<sup>61</sup>

Secondly, domestic considerations remained important. On 25 November, the Duma passed a declaration expressing serious concern at the further sharpening of the crisis in former Yugoslavia':

It is impossible to consider the recent bombing strikes by NATO forces on the territory of Serb Krajina and Bosnia as justified. The impression is being created that the UN is increasingly being used for covert military intervention by NATO in the civil war in former Yugoslavia. This is discrediting the very idea of peace-keeping on the part of the UN.

The Duma called on the international community to use solely political means to resolve the crisis, and to desist from the application of 'double standards' leading to action only against the Serb side. It concluded by calling on the Russian President and MFA to use in the Contact Group and the UNSC 'all political and diplomatic means, up to and including the use of the veto in the UN Security Council, to prevent external military intervention in the conflict in former Yugoslavia'.<sup>62</sup>

But the issue was also linked to the overall European security framework and the role of Russia and NATO within it. Earlier in 1994, Russia had put forward proposals to establish the CSCE as the primary European security organisation, including the

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<sup>60</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 54.

<sup>61</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (30 October 1994).

<sup>62</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (25 November 1994).



creation of an executive body that would be a kind of Security Council for the organisation, with permanent members holding a right to veto.<sup>63</sup> These proposals received a sceptical reception, not only from the United States and Western European states, but also from Central and Eastern European states and the former Soviet republics which feared that the proposed changes would strengthen Russia's position and threaten the CSCE principle of 'one country, one vote'.<sup>64</sup> At the CSCE summit in Budapest in December 1994, Yeltsin spoke of putting the CSCE at the centre of a comprehensive all-European security system,<sup>65</sup> but one of the few concessions to this view was the changing of the name to 'Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe' (OSCE).

At the same summit meeting, divisions over NATO expansion and the role of NATO in former Yugoslavia deepened between Russia and, in particular, the United States. Clinton declared that no country could prevent other states from joining the alliance, while Yeltsin warned that plans to expand NATO were at variance with moves towards European unity and would jeopardise democratic transition in Russia.<sup>66</sup> Yeltsin did not refer specifically to the Balkans, but Kozyrev had previously expressed similar doubts about NATO expansion, its effects on Russia's domestic situation, and directly linked this with NATO action in Bosnia. For example, after meeting NATO's deputy Secretary-General, he stated:

Our ultra-nationalists trying to stage a domestic *révanche* would certainly take advantage of such ill-considered steps as hasty expansion of NATO membership or the alliance's bombing strikes in Bosnia.<sup>67</sup>

Despite the efforts in 1994 to achieve great power unity, it was obvious that deep divisions still existed over the key issues of the use of military force and the role of NATO. Disagreements were particularly sharp between the United States and Russia. In many respects, the Western European states shared Russian doubts over the use of force, although not necessarily for the same reasons. France, Canada, and the United Kingdom were concerned particularly about the impact that NATO air strikes were having on the UNPROFOR humanitarian mission and the implications for the security of their troops;<sup>68</sup> France also shared Russia's scepticism about NATO (historically,

<sup>63</sup> Aleksandrov (14 July 1994). Russia would, of course, be one of the permanent members of this 'Security Council'.

<sup>64</sup> Iusin (12 October 1994).

<sup>65</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (7 December 1994).

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>67</sup> *Interfax* (3 November 1994).

<sup>68</sup> Sloan (1998), pp. 63-4.



French policy makers regarded NATO as an instrument for American domination).<sup>69</sup> These doubts allowed Russia to side with these powers in blocking American initiatives, mainly in the forum of the Contact Group, although Russian diplomats also backed other doubters within NATO, particularly Greece.<sup>70</sup>

## The Contact Group plan

The Contact Group formulated a map based on a 51:49 per cent division of Bosnia-Herzegovina between the Muslim-Croat Federation and the Serb entity, Republika Srpska, respectively. They decided to leave the constitutional details until later, but declared that Bosnia-Herzegovina would remain a unitary state; Russia also insisted that Republika Srpska would have identical rights to the Muslim-Croat Federation, which in this context meant the right to confederal relations with Serbia.<sup>71</sup> The final map drawn up in Geneva was presented to the conflicting sides on 6 July 1994 (map 8).

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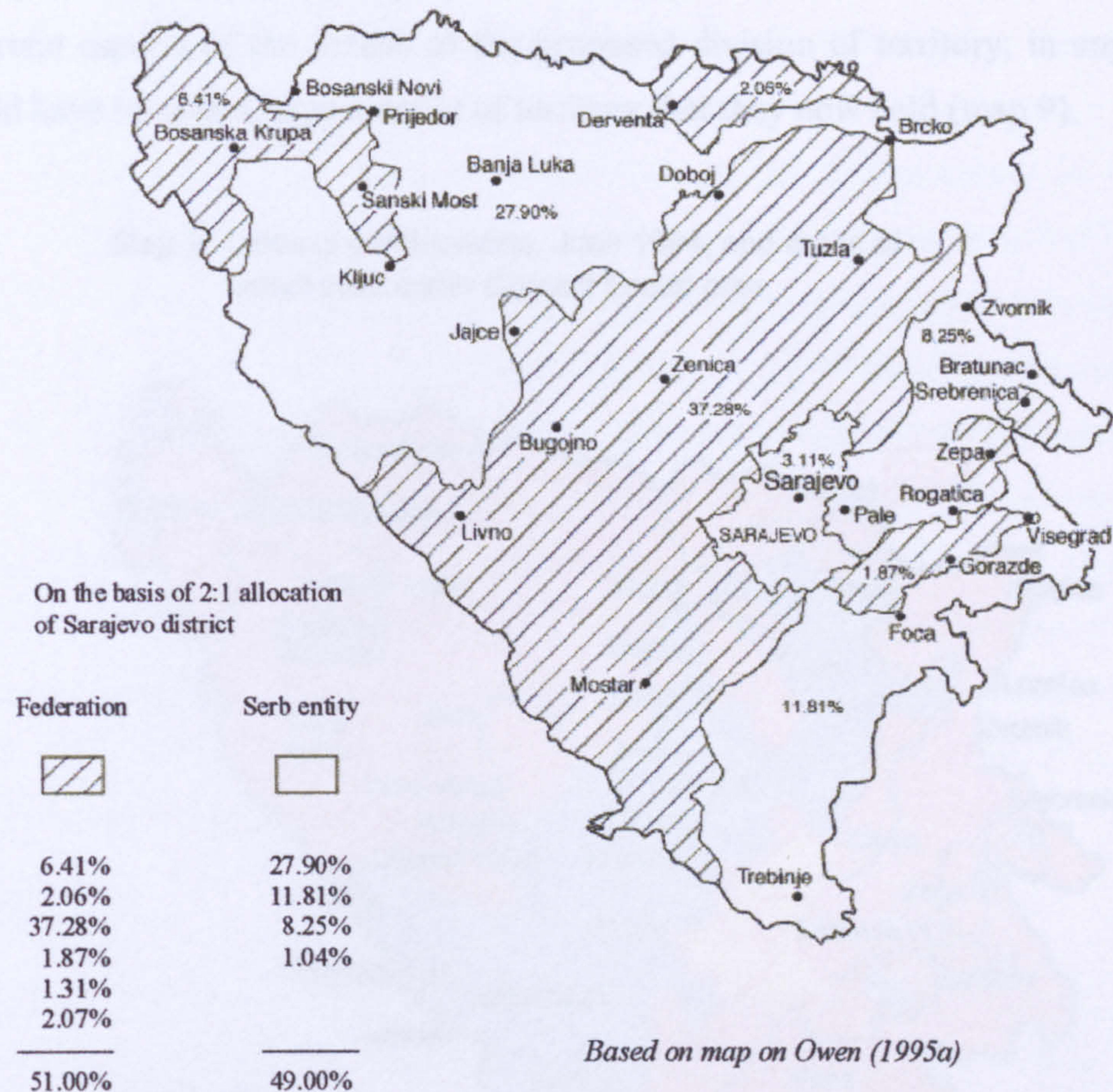
<sup>69</sup> For an argument that Juppé and Kozyrev shared a suspicion of NATO, and combined in Budapest to block an increased NATO role in European affairs, leading to a 'complete paralysis of the will of the UN and NATO air forces under its control in Bosnia', see Vinogradov *et al* (7 December 1994).

<sup>70</sup> Sloan (1998) p. 64.

<sup>71</sup> *NTV* (20 July 1994); Eggert (3 August 1994). This principle was finally agreed by the Contact Group at its summit in December 1994.



Map 8 Contact Group map, July 1994



The sides were given two weeks to accept the map on the understanding that it was not for negotiation, although changes could be made later if agreed mutually between the parties. Russian diplomats exerted pressure on the Serbs to accept. Churkin and Grachev were sent to Belgrade where they presented Karadžić with a letter from Yeltsin that was reported to outline Russian guarantees that certain Serb demands – relating to the possibility of confederation with Serbia, and a corridor through Brčko protected by Russian peace-keepers – would be met if the Bosnian Serbs accepted the Geneva package.<sup>72</sup>

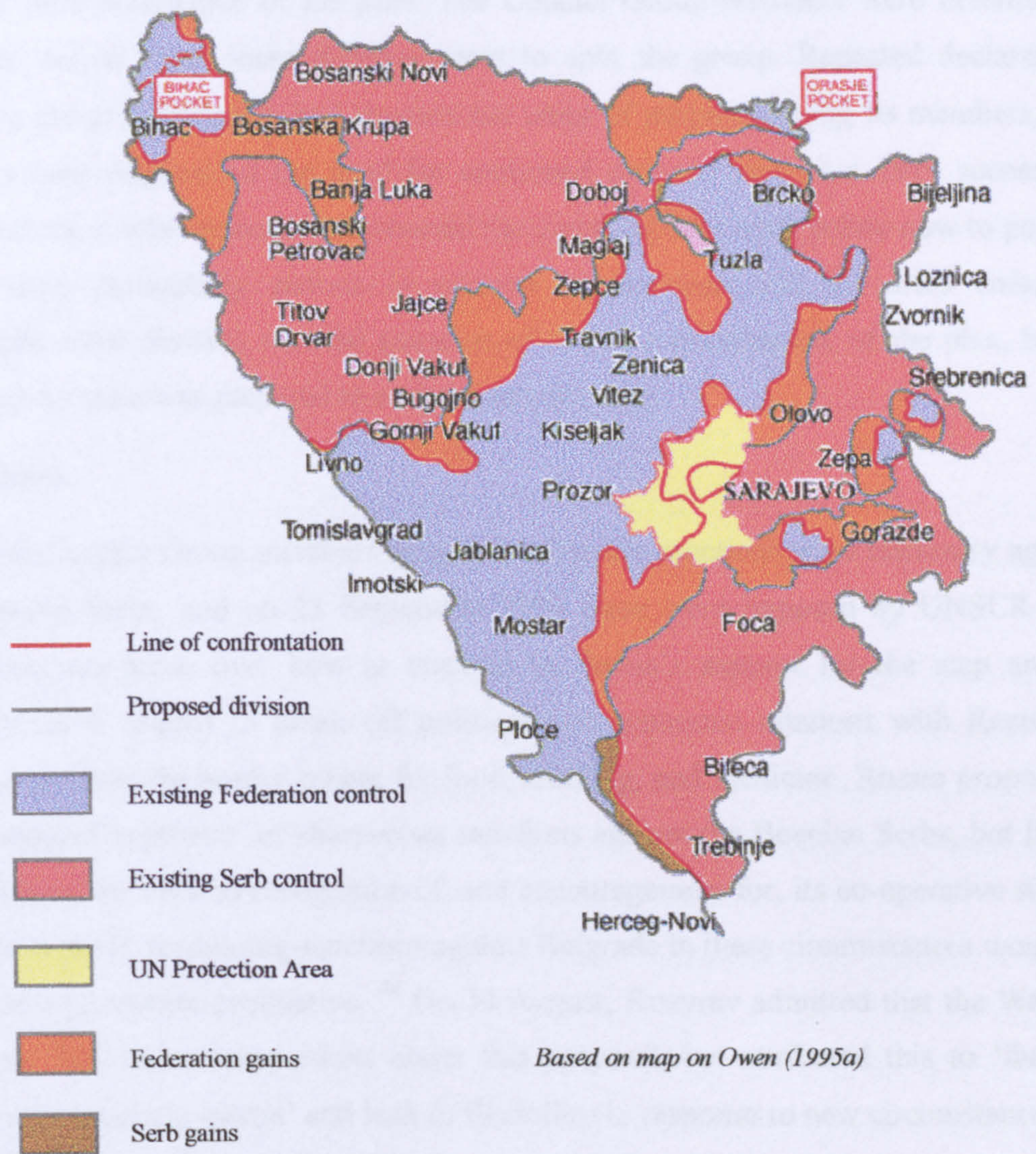
The Contact Group spoke of incentives and disincentives to encourage both sides to accept the map, although they gave few details beyond promising the suspension of sanctions if the Serbs accepted, and tightening of sanctions if they rejected. The Bosnian government accepted the map with reservations, acknowledging that it preserved

<sup>72</sup> Baturin (30 July 1994).



Bosnia-Herzegovina as a unitary state. The Bosnian Serbs rejected the map precisely because it preserved Bosnia-Herzegovina as a unitary state and because they would not accept certain aspects of the details of the proposed division of territory; in any case, they would have to cede a large amount of territory that they now held (map 9).

**Map 9** Lines of confrontation, June 1994, and areas of withdrawal under Contact Group plan



Deputies of the Pale 'assembly' sent a letter to Yeltsin and to Milošević in which they stated that accepting the 'incomplete and in many respects unknown' plan of the Contact Group would be 'national suicide' for the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>73</sup> Supporters of the Serbs in Moscow of course accepted this at face value. Elena Gus'kova, for example,

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*



wrote that the map was 'fundamentally unfavourable to the Serbs'. A page later, it is clear why: 'the proposed variant of 49 per cent of the territory did not suit the Serbs who at that time held around 75 per cent of all of the territory Bosnia and Herzegovina'.<sup>74</sup>

The reason for the Contact Group's vagueness regarding disincentives now became clear: its members were divided over what action to take in response to the Bosnian Serb rejection and the positive response to the map by Milošević, who again favoured Bosnian Serb acceptance of the plan. The Contact Group members were determined, however, not to allow these disagreements to split the group. Repeated declarations since the group's formation had stressed the unity of purpose among its members, and Kozyrev now emphasised the need for continued unity to prevent a 1914 scenario.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, it was impossible to conceal the divisions over what policy now to pursue, which were particularly serious in relation to sanctions and the arms embargo. Potentially most divisive was the question of military enforcement of the plan, but at this stage no state was prepared to endorse this anyway.

## Sanctions

All of the Contact Group members agreed that harsher sanctions were necessary against the Bosnian Serbs, and on 23 September 1994 these were imposed by UNSCR 942. Disagreements arose over how to respond to Serbia's support for the map and its decision on 4 August to break off political and economic relations with Republika Srpska and close the border except for food, clothing, and medicine. Russia proposed a 'differentiated approach' of sharpening sanctions against the Bosnian Serbs, but lifting them against the FRY as recognition of, and encouragement for, its co-operative stance; as Karasin put it, continuing sanctions against Belgrade in these circumstances would be 'illogical and counter-productive'.<sup>76</sup> On 30 August, Kozyrev admitted that the Western 'partners' had major reservations about this proposal, but attributed this to 'familiar politico-bureaucratic inertia' and lack of flexibility in response to new circumstances.<sup>77</sup>

The Western states, in particular the United States, insisted that observers must be placed on the border between the FRY and 'Republika Srpska' to confirm that supplies were no longer going to the Bosnian Serbs; after all, a similar announcement after the Bosnian Serb rejection of the Vance-Owen plan had led to no long-term change in

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<sup>74</sup> Gus'kova, (1998a), pp. 37-8.

<sup>75</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (29 July 1994).

<sup>76</sup> Russian Federation MFA (11 August 1994).

<sup>77</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (30 August 1994).



Belgrade's policy. In addition, the United States wanted to link the lifting of sanctions to a solution of the Krajina problem, and even of the Kosovo issue.<sup>78</sup> At the least they expected the FRY government to recognise the Republic of Croatia and the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina officially, but the FRY authorities were not yet prepared to do this, despite Kozyrev's efforts to persuade Milošević.<sup>79</sup> Russian diplomats, however, pointed out that sanctions had been introduced as a response to support by the FRY for the Bosnian Serbs in the conflict in Bosnia; if the FRY no longer supported the Bosnian Serbs, then the justification for sanctions no longer existed. Britain and France also rejected linkage over Croatia because it would delay a settlement on Bosnia but, on this issue, Germany supported the United States.<sup>80</sup>

It was unlikely that any of the Western powers would accept full lifting of the sanctions on the FRY until a peace deal was signed, because of the possibility that Milošević would return to supporting the Bosnian Serbs militarily; in such circumstances, it would be difficult to avoid a Russian veto on a resolution to re-introduce sanctions given the present basis of Russian policy and the pressure of domestic political opinion.<sup>81</sup> A compromise was therefore reached by which certain sanctions would be suspended; initially, by UNSCR 943 of 23 September 1994, those preventing civilian flights, ferry services to Bar (Montenegro), and participation in sporting activities and cultural exchanges, for an initial period of 100 days. Russia continued to push for further relaxation of the sanctions regime; for instance, the Russian Security Council representative abstained on UNSCR 988 of 21 April 1995 because it merely extended this suspension for 75 days. And Russian diplomats particularly pressured the UN sanctions committee to allow the supply of humanitarian goods to the FRY, especially fuel and medicine.<sup>82</sup>

This position on sanctions was not adopted purely from considerations of the situation in the FRY and the Bosnian conflict. During this period, Russia began to strengthen its bilateral relations with the FRY, laying a basis for the potential establishment of Yugoslavia as Russia's economic and military ally in the Balkans. The process began immediately after the split between Belgrade and Pale. Kozyrev made it clear in an interview on 1 August 1994:

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<sup>78</sup> Ludlow (1995).

<sup>79</sup> Shchedrunova (21 February 1995); Milošević said that Belgrade would be 'willing to recognise the separatist republics as independent states as soon as a political solution [was] found to the problems engendered by their unilateral and illegal separation from Yugoslavia'.

<sup>80</sup> Owen (1995b).

<sup>81</sup> Iusin (20 April 1994).

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Russian Federation MFA (3 November 1994).



Our bilateral relations with Yugoslavia or Serbia are nobody's business. It is our affair and how we build them is up to us. We have friendly relations and I am sure that, after they have said yes to the peace plan, the sanctions will be lifted and no one prevents us from having full-scale economic, cultural and, if you like, military relations in the sphere of security between Russia and Serbia.<sup>83</sup>

Later that month, the Russian and Yugoslav governments signed an agreement on trade and economic co-operation.<sup>84</sup> Talks also began on deliveries of Russian gas for humanitarian purposes as soon as the UN Committee on Sanctions authorised this (permission was finally granted on 17 February 1995), but there was also a longer-term plan to increase Russian gas deliveries to between 7 and 10 billion cubic metres a year after construction of a gas pipe-line through Bulgaria and Serbia (a joint venture between Gazprom and four Yugoslav enterprises had already been created).<sup>85</sup> And, on 28 February 1995, the Russian and Yugoslav Defence Ministers signed an agreement on military co-operation which laid the foundation for, as Kozyrev put it, a 'programme of full-scale co-operation between the Russian Federation and the FRY in the military and military-technical spheres'.<sup>86</sup>

After signing the agreement on trade and economic co-operation, the Russian Minister for Foreign Economic Relations, Oleg Davydov, said that, thanks to these documents, Russia would be 'practically the first among the developed nations of the world to get a firm footing in the Yugoslav market'.<sup>87</sup> This shows that the motivation for the agreements was primarily economic rather than to provide support to the Serbs; for example, the military agreement did not cover weapons deliveries from Russia to the FRY,<sup>88</sup> while an agreement on supplying Russian gas was also signed with the Bosnian Muslim-Croat Federation after talks between the Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin (who was closely involved in Gazprom) and the Bosnian Prime Minister Haris Silajdžić.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, the MFA was adamant that the agreements with the FRY would come into force only when sanctions had been lifted fully, stating that it could not break international law. Nevertheless, it intensified its efforts to gain the abolition of the sanctions regime.

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<sup>83</sup> *Russia TV* (1 August 1994).

<sup>84</sup> Portanskii (26 August 1994).

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Tanjug* (28 February 1995) and *ITAR-TASS* (28 February 1995).

<sup>87</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (24 August 1994).

<sup>88</sup> Grudinina (3 March 1995).

<sup>89</sup> Gornostaev (4 February 1995).



The Duma, as before, was pushing the government to lift sanctions unilaterally, without waiting for a vote in the UNSC. For example, in April 1995 the Duma repeated its demand to the government to work in the UNSC and Contact Group for the lifting of sanctions and the FRY's full reinstatement in international bodies such as the United Nations.<sup>90</sup> The Duma's actions were not simply a continuation of its previous policy on sanctions but also a shot in what Kozyrev called a 'war of parliaments' with the United States Congress, which was pushing the US administration to lift the arms embargo unilaterally.<sup>91</sup> The result of this was serious division within the Contact Group.

### **The arms embargo**

There had been hints from the Contact Group that the arms embargo might be lifted if the Serb side refused to accept the map. At the meetings in Geneva on 5 July and 30 July, the foreign ministers warned that in the event of rejection of the Contact Group proposal, a decision in the Security Council to lift the arms embargo could become unavoidable as a last resort, with consequences for the continuation of UNPROFOR.<sup>92</sup> But this idea was never seriously entertained by the UK, probably not by France, and certainly not by Russia, for whom it was inconceivable for domestic reasons, especially since the Duma repeatedly demanded that the government veto any such proposals.

All of the European powers realised that UNPROFOR would have to withdraw from Bosnia if the embargo was lifted and that this would lead to an escalation of the fighting. Lavrov stated the Russian position clearly in the UNSC:

Russia has repeatedly stated its vehement disagreement with the demand to lift the embargo, since this step would propel Bosnia and Herzegovina into an abyss of even more bloodshed. We continue to believe that this extremely undesirable measure is fraught with a number of very adverse consequences, one of which would be a curtailment of the United Nations peace-keeping operation.<sup>93</sup>

But in Washington, Congress was pressuring the Clinton administration to lift the arms embargo, unilaterally if necessary. In May 1994, the Senate voted for two alternative resolutions, one demanding that the administration lift the arms embargo on the Bosnian government side unilaterally, the other calling on it to pressure the UN to

<sup>90</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (14 April 1995).

<sup>91</sup> Abarinov (17 May 1994).

<sup>92</sup> Russian Federation MFA (5 July 1994a) and (30 July 1994).

<sup>93</sup> United Nations Security Council (23 September 1994), p. 31.



lift the embargo.<sup>94</sup> And in June, the House of Representatives voted for unilateral mandatory lifting of the embargo.

Undoubtedly, lifting the embargo would have seriously affected relations between the great powers, and the Russian government would have been under intense domestic pressure to provide support to the Serb side. There again appeared to be a coalition of European members of the Contact Group against the United States (although France considered withdrawing its troops and lifting the arms embargo, it subsequently abandoned the idea). Ultimately, however, all the Contact Group members recognised that UNPROFOR would have to be withdrawn if the embargo was lifted. Not even the United States was prepared to do this, and it accepted the will of the other powers, adopting a compromise with international opinion by announcing in November 1994 that it had ceased to monitor the embargo but was not abrogating it unilaterally. The official Russian reaction to this decision was critical but restrained, which reflected understanding of the domestic pressure on the Clinton administration. An MFA declaration stated that the decision caused 'regret and concern', and expressed suspicion about the purpose, arguing that '[f]or a variety of reasons, including internal political reasons, the USA is all the more insistently attempting to implement one-sided decisions, outside the framework of concerted action'; if peace was to prevail, then concerted action was necessary not only of Europeans, but of the whole international community.<sup>95</sup>

Russian diplomats did, however, express 'serious concern' at reports of infringements of the arms embargo. Karasin, for example, said that such actions could irreparably damage the international efforts to achieve an overall peace settlement, add fuel to the fire of the conflict, and play into the hands of the 'war party' of each of the conflicting sides in Bosnia.<sup>96</sup>

### **Military enforcement**

The debate over sanctions and the arms embargo revealed divisions within the Contact Group, particularly between the European powers and the United States. The desire for unity and the lack of will to withdraw UNPROFOR and end the humanitarian mission meant that a compromise was reached on each issue, and the least controversial policy was adopted. The same applied to the use of force to impose the Contact Group map,

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<sup>94</sup> The Russian Duma reacted by passing a resolution linking Russia's lifting of sanctions against Serbia to the United States' lifting of the arms embargo; Abarinov (17 May 1994).

<sup>95</sup> Russian Federation MFA (12 November 1994).

<sup>96</sup> Russian Federation MFA (5 July 1994b).



although even the United States was not enthusiastic and did not push the point. Nevertheless, Russian diplomats suspected that increased NATO action in Bosnia during November was leading to the development of events 'exclusively in a scenario based on military force' as a result of American pressure.<sup>97</sup> Consequently, Kozyrev held bilateral meetings with the European members of the Contact Group, and together they proposed a meeting of the Group at ministerial level, at which 'the position of the European participants was explained':

In a word, a 'difficult positive' was worked out in the direction of ending military actions. The impression was created that the majority of the politicians understand the senselessness of putting trust in force and air strikes, even if they are carried out on the request of UNPROFOR and the resolutions of the UNSC.<sup>98</sup>

The result was that, just as with the Vance-Owen plan, the major international states declined to impose the plan that they had adopted or, in this case, formulated. As David Owen wrote, it seemed 'politically inconceivable that these five governments could now just leave such a map on the table. But it was more than conceivable: it was exactly what they did.'<sup>99</sup> Owen in fact advised the EU Foreign Ministers to adopt 'leave, lift and strike':<sup>100</sup> to use NATO to withdraw UNPROFOR personnel from Bosnia-Herzegovina, then lift the arms embargo and use air strikes to hold back the likely Serb advance until the government forces had effective weapons. Such a strategy made sense in relation to an internationally-agreed peace plan, as Owen argues:

This was *leave* as well as 'lift and strike', and it contained two crucial differences from what President Clinton had suggested a year before: first, it would be air action threatened in support of a specific peace plan; and second, it would be air action which had Russian acquiescence, perhaps even Russian support.<sup>101</sup>

Yet, while the first point is valid, there was every indication that Russia would *not* support the use of force. Throughout 1994, Russian diplomats were very clear on this point. They were suspicious of the use of close air support, they protested at the use of ultimatums, and they also opposed the use of force to impose a peace settlement. According to David Ludlow (secretary of the Contact Group at that time), Churkin had made it clear at the Foreign Ministers' meeting before the presentation of the map that

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<sup>97</sup> Russian Federation MFA (27 November 1994).

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> Owen (1996), p. 302.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 308-311.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 302-3.



Russia could not accept the use of air power to fight on behalf of the Federation.<sup>102</sup> After the Bosnian Serbs had rejected the map, Kozyrev again insisted on this. In his letter to Boutros-Ghali at the end of November, he wrote:

I believe it necessary to underline that the role of the UN in former Yugoslavia is neither to 'coerce' the sides to peace, nor to wage war, but to provide multi-faceted support for a peaceful political settlement.<sup>103</sup>

The rejection of force to impose the plan was presumably what Kozyrev meant when he described the Contact Group plan as a '*peaceful* ultimatum' [*mirnyi ul'timatum*].<sup>104</sup> Nevertheless, Owen claimed in his letter to the EU Foreign Ministers that '[p]rovided air strikes are limited to Bosnian Serb territory, the Russians ought to be able to tolerate them';<sup>105</sup> even more unrealistically, he believed that 'Yeltsin could have been persuaded to accept the use of air power for a peace settlement; and in the right climate Russia would accept being involved, together with NATO, in carrying out any air action'.<sup>106</sup> What that 'right climate' could be, given the domestic Russian situation, is beyond my imagination; but this argument gives Owen the chance again to lay the blame on the Clinton administration.

Redman argued at the Contact Group meeting on 16 June that military options, possibly graduated, had to be considered;<sup>107</sup> but Owen is right to say that the US backed away from adopting this policy, as well as lifting the arms embargo and removing UNPROFOR. Perhaps he is also right to argue that this was because the Clinton administration had been 'posturing' and had never seriously considered imposing a settlement.<sup>108</sup> For all the Contact Group members, international unity remained a priority; given Russia's position, and the doubts of the other European states, 'leave, lift and strike' would have been impossible for the United States to implement in any other way but unilaterally. At this stage, the US was unlikely even to carry its NATO allies.

Hence, no state believed that it was in its interest at this stage to abandon the consensual approach nor to withdraw the UN forces. Contact Group members were worried about the consequences of such an action for Bosnia; according to one senior Russian diplomat, 'a withdrawal of UNPROFOR would be a humanitarian, political and

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<sup>102</sup> Ludlow (1995).

<sup>103</sup> Russian Federation MFA (25 November 1994).

<sup>104</sup> Russian Federation MFA (5 July 1994a); my italics.

<sup>105</sup> Owen (1996), p. 311.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>107</sup> Ludlow (1995).

<sup>108</sup> Owen (1996), p. 312.



military catastrophe for Bosnia'.<sup>109</sup> Policy makers were concerned also at the likely effect of the escalation of the conflict on relations between the major powers, as were United Nations diplomats; Akashi, for instance, argued that if the UN troops left, '[t]he conflict would sharpen and spill out of Bosnia. Cleavages between the United States and Russia would be exacerbated. There would be a major destabilisation of Europe.'<sup>110</sup> Similarly, France abandoned the idea of withdrawal because it 'would lead to a humanitarian crisis, encourage Muslim governments and Russia to enter the war on opposing sides and disgrace the United Nations'.<sup>111</sup>

## Conclusion

At the end of 1994, Russia remained a major participant in the search for a peace settlement, but its policy was a further brake on any efforts to enforce the map that the great powers had agreed. Repeated warnings of the impact of any enforcement action in Bosnia on Russian domestic politics reinforced the message. Russia also sought to build on European doubts about US interventionism, although this strategy was not entirely successful, since Germany increasingly sided with the US; this prevented the Contact Group from splitting into a partnership of the Europeans against America, which would have destroyed the consensual approach.<sup>112</sup> For all of the powers, the perceived interests in maintaining great power unity and containing the crisis out-weighed the risks of a more interventionist stance. As Ludlow writes,

The [Contact] Group was in many ways seen as an experiment in international diplomacy, and this had implications for the negotiations on Bosnia. At times the driving force appeared to be the will to maintain European/Russian/American solidarity, even if this meant unwelcome compromises at potentially crucial stages of the peace process. A strong adverse reaction from one participant often resulted in the other representatives, even if they saw merit in the proposals, acquiescing in the interests of maintaining solidarity.<sup>113</sup>

This was to change with the escalation of the conflict in spring 1995.

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<sup>109</sup> Grudinina (16 December 1994).

<sup>110</sup> Sloan (1998), p. 64.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Owen (1995b).

<sup>113</sup> Ludlow (1995).



## **Chapter 8**

### **Collapse of the great power concert and the end of the Bosnian conflict, May – December 1995**

The consensual approach, which was partly the consequence of Russia's insistence on its great power status and the necessity of its involvement in conflict resolution, maintained co-operative relations between the great powers but did little to resolve the conflict in Bosnia. Although a four-month cease-fire agreement negotiated by the former American president, Jimmy Carter, began on 1 February 1995, it was clear that the Bosnian government side, increasingly gaining strength, would not agree to a permanent cease-fire without the prior acceptance by the Bosnian Serbs of a peace plan that secured Bosnia-Herzegovina's territorial integrity and gave the Muslim-Croat Federation at least fifty-one per cent of the territory; while the Bosnian Serbs were determined to defend militarily the territory that they refused to give up through negotiations. The conflict was likely therefore to erupt ferociously at the end of the cease-fire. When this indeed happened in summer 1995, the Western powers considered that their own credibility, and that of NATO and the United Nations, was at stake since, after three years of war, their mediation and peace-keeping efforts appeared to have achieved very little. Led by the United States, NATO began to coerce the Bosnian Serbs to accept a peace agreement, in the process ignoring Russia's objections. Bringing an end to the conflict now out-weighed the risk of worsened relations with Russia in Western calculations, particularly for the Clinton administration with election year approaching. This action marked the failure of common great power diplomacy, since Russia was now pushed aside, and America took the lead in negotiating a cease-fire and then a peace settlement at Dayton, Ohio. Ultimately, the United States perceived that great power unity – in particular, between Russia and the West – was incompatible with effective peace enforcement.

Russian policy was based on asserting its great power role in the Balkans and in conflict resolution. Not surprisingly, policy makers reacted angrily to the American and NATO actions. The domestic consensus was demonstrated as politicians across the political spectrum spoke out against the NATO air campaign and Russia's peripheral role. Nevertheless, the Yeltsin administration still valued co-operation with the West and also saw this as the only way to prevent Russia from being marginalised further.



Russia agreed therefore to participate in the NATO-led peace implementation force, IFOR.

The events of summer 1995 showed that Russia had seriously over-estimated its own importance, as well as the achievements of Russian policy up to 1994. The Sarajevo agreement – Russia's greatest 'triumph' – was increasingly broken, and its failure to protect the civilian population was demonstrated starkly by the mortar explosion in the market-place in 28 August 1995 that led to extensive NATO air strikes. And the conflict in Croatia, far from being 'reduced to zero' as Churkin had claimed, erupted again dramatically in May 1995, the cease-fire having lasted only a few months.

## **The Croatian offensives**

There had been major diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving a permanent peaceful resolution of the situation in Croatia, which continued the co-operative work that had enabled the cease-fire agreement to be reached in March 1994. The forum was the 'Zagreb Four' or 'Z-4' of the US and Russian ambassadors to Croatia, Peter Galbraith and Leonid Kerestedzhiiants, and two ICFY diplomats, Geert Ahrens and Kai Eide. The Z-4 composed a draft agreement for Croatia that would have given Krajina a significant level of autonomy, incorporated Western Slavonia into the Croatian local government system – thus returning it fully to Croatia – and put Eastern Slavonia under UN-administration while demilitarisation occurred and refugees returned. The plan was a worthy co-operative attempt to use de-centralisation and autonomy to resolve the problem of minority rights in Croatia and reverse 'ethnic cleansing', while preserving Croatia's territorial integrity.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, it suffered a similar fate to the equivalent plan for Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Vance-Owen plan. The 'international community' was not prepared to impose it nor even to defend the outlines of the plan in the face of its non-acceptance. The plan soon became irrelevant because the Croatian authorities chose to re-take Western Slavonia and Krajina by force. In early May 1995, the Croatian Army used an incident on the Zagreb-Belgrade highway as a pretext to re-take Sector West. Then, at the start of August, a full-scale offensive led to the re-capture of Krajina, and a mass exodus of the Serb population.

Russian reactions to these events constituted, in part, a reasonable attempt to be objective/balanced, to demonstrate a consistent policy to such actions by whichever side they were committed, and to show that Russia opposed all solutions based on force. This was in contrast to what they saw as Western collusion in the Croatian offensive.

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<sup>1</sup> Hodonj (1995).



The MFA categorically condemned the offensives and the use of force to resolve the Krajina issue, and accused the Croatian government of violating a number of UNSC resolutions and ignoring the UN Secretary-General's calls for restraint.<sup>2</sup> It criticised in particular the Croatian government's abandonment of negotiations with representatives of the 'Republic of Serb Krajina' (RSK) in Geneva. According to the MFA, these negotiations

gave the sides in the conflict a real possibility to achieve compromises, opening the way to a political settlement. To our deep regret, the Croat side showed no readiness to work out accords, adopting a position based on ultimatum. The conclusion must be drawn that Zagreb was already inclined to seek not a political but a purely military solution.<sup>3</sup>

Russia appealed to the Security Council to condemn the offensives. On 17 May, the UNSC adopted Resolution 994 calling for an end to the offensive in Sector West, and respect for the mandate and personnel of UNCRO (United Nations Confidence Restoration Operation, as the UN forces in Croatia had been re-named in March). This resolution was prepared in the Contact Group and then in the UNSC;<sup>4</sup> nevertheless, according to First Deputy Foreign Minister Igor' Ivanov, other members of these bodies were unwilling to condemn the offensive so clearly:

This was not an easy resolution to reach. Not everyone at the UN Security Council wanted objectively to condemn the aggressor. The aggressor, regardless of who it is, should be condemned. Unfortunately, there have been precedents before when only one party was condemned, whereas the Russian Federation's partners sometimes closed their eyes at unlawful actions of other parties.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, in relation to the Krajina offensive in August, the Russian Federation was the initiator of UNSCR 1009 of 10 August 1995 which condemned the Croat offensive and demanded that the Croatian government cease all military activities in Sectors North and South and comply with all relevant Security Council resolutions. Again, other states were unwilling initially to support such a resolution, which accounts for the delay in its adoption (the offensive began on 4 August).<sup>6</sup>

In fact, Russian diplomats were critical of the attitude both of Western governments and the United Nations. They argued that the West had encouraged the

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<sup>2</sup> Russian Federation MFA (4 August 1995).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> Speech by Lavrov, United Nations Security Council (17 May 1995), pp. 5-6.

<sup>5</sup> *Interfax* (18 May 1995).

<sup>6</sup> Russian Federation MFA (11 August 1995).



attacks, by allowing the arms embargo to be broken,<sup>7</sup> and by failing to react to clear signs that an attack was imminent; they accused Western governments of preferring to accept a solution to the Krajina problem based on 'ethnic cleansing'. And they claimed that the UNCRO commanders had not reacted to the attack in a forceful manner, thereby casting into doubt the effectiveness of the UN peace-keeping mission in former Yugoslavia and contrasting with action taken against the Bosnian Serbs.

These points were made explicitly by Kozyrev in a letter to Boutros-Ghali, distributed in the Security Council on 8 August:

Alas, in Zagreb, an inclination towards the forcible integration of the Serb-inhabited regions prevailed, and was indirectly encouraged from the capitals of a number of leading states.

We are faced with a case where the principles of a just settlement are sacrificed to the philosophy of 'accomplished facts'. We consider that such an approach will have fatal consequences both for settling the Yugoslav crisis and, more widely, for the role that the UN is called upon to play in supporting and restoring peace and security...

The absence of an appropriate reaction to the latest developments serves as an additional basis for accusing the UN of double standards. Very serious consideration needs to be paid to the circumstance in which the UNCRO command did not request (or did not receive?) NATO air support for the defence of its personnel, moreover at the same time that NATO aircraft, called on by B. Janvier, were firing on the positions of the Krajina Serbs already subject to the Croat attack.<sup>8</sup>

Russian diplomats attempted to counter-act this partiality by taking measures designed to show impartiality and a balanced approach. They suggested that they might raise the question of imposing sanctions against Croatia, although they recognised that there was no point in taking this to the Security Council since other members would not support it.<sup>9</sup> They tried to arrange a summit meeting in Moscow between Tudjman and Milošević, but Tudjman refused to attend;<sup>10</sup> in this he was again supported by Western governments, who were suspicious of a meeting between those two leaders without the

<sup>7</sup> Ironically, one report claimed that Russia itself had sold tanks and anti-aircraft missile systems to Croatia; Fel'gengauer (5 August 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Russian Federation MFA (8 August 1995a).

<sup>9</sup> Comments by director of the MFA's Department for International Organisations and Global Problems, Aleksandr Gorelik, *Interfax* (7 August 1995) and (11 August 1995). Gorelik interpreted UNSCR 1009 as 'a kind of compromise ... the most that could be achieved'.

<sup>10</sup> Letter by Yeltsin to UNSC, *Interfax* (10 August 1995).



Bosnian President, Alija Izetbegović, being present.<sup>11</sup> (The result was that only Milošević went to meet Yeltsin in Moscow). In addition, Russia began to send humanitarian aid to Serb refugees from Croatia. Finally, Russian policy makers repeatedly highlighted what they referred to as Belgrade's 'restrained' reaction to the Croat offensive, which they argued was another reason to lift sanctions against the FRY.<sup>12</sup>

To what extent was Russia's position justified? Vladimir Abarinov in *Segodnia* claimed that '[d]espite the undesirability of forcible measures, the restoration of the territorial integrity of Croatia, whose borders are recognised by the world community, is an entirely legitimate goal of a legitimate government'.<sup>13</sup> This suggests an obvious problem with the Russian position: the administration was opposing an operation by the Croatian government that had identical aims to Russia's own action in Chechnya, which was still continuing. The comparison was not lost to many Russian commentators. For example, Konstantin Eggert and Maksim Iusin wrote in *Izvestiia*:

As far as Russia is concerned, its arguments will hardly be taken seriously after the events in Chechnya: in the final analysis, Tudjman did exactly what Yeltsin attempted to do in the North Caucasus, but he did it much more skilfully and, most importantly, with little bloodshed.<sup>14</sup>

Even Aleksandr Zotov – from November 1994, Churkin's successor as Russian Special Envoy in former Yugoslavia – agreed with an interviewer in May 1995 that it was 'difficult enough for us to say anything' about the Croat offensive in Western Slavonia after Chechnya.<sup>15</sup>

The attack on the UNPAs demonstrated the weakness of a policy of demilitarisation – which had occurred to a certain extent in Sector West, but not Sector East<sup>16</sup> – when combined with a lack of will and resources on the part of the UN to defend the areas. Yet, one of Russia's key demands in Bosnia-Herzegovina was demilitarisation of the 'safe areas', while Russian diplomats also sought to limit the response by UN forces to an attack on the 'safe areas', particularly the use of air strikes. The inadequacy of such a policy was shown by the fall of Srebrenica in July, but also by the Croat offensive in Krajina and Western Slavonia.

<sup>11</sup> Eggert and Iusin (11 August 1995).

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, Russian Federation MFA (4 August 1995).

<sup>13</sup> Abarinov (8 August 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Eggert and Iusin (8 August 1995); also, Fel'gengauer (5 August 1995).

<sup>15</sup> *Russian Public TV* (3 May 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Ekwall-Uebelhart and Raevsky (1996), p. 114.



## The hostage crisis and the creation of the Rapid Reaction Force

In May 1995, firing across the lines of separation and infringements of the heavy weapons exclusion zone around Sarajevo were increasingly occurring. The UN command gave the Serb side an ultimatum to return four heavy weapons to a depot or face air strikes. Apparent failure to meet the deadline led to NATO air strikes. The Serb forces responded by shelling Sarajevo, Tuzla, Goražde, Bihać, and Srebrenica. This in turn led to further air strikes on Bosnian Serb positions near Pale. In response, the Serbs seized United Nations military observers as hostages.<sup>17</sup>

Once again, Russian statements conveyed a confusing mixture of condemnation of the Bosnian Serb actions and of the NATO/UN reactions. Yeltsin told journalists that Russia was against the use of NATO aircraft, but had warned the Bosnian Serbs that an air strike would be inevitable if they did not stop military operations;<sup>18</sup> instead, 'Serbian leaders continued the military operations and got what they deserved'.<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, when Helmut Kohl and John Major asked for Russian help in resolving the hostage crisis, according to the President's press service, Yeltsin again expressed 'serious dissatisfaction over the fact that the decision on the bombing of the Bosnian Serbs was adopted without any exchange of opinions with Russia'. He complained to the British and German leaders that 'now, when as a result of this action, the situation has become exacerbated, Russia is being asked to help'.<sup>20</sup> This annoyance with the failure to consult with Russia was understandable given that, as a consequence of the air strikes, hostages were taken, among whom were Russian personnel. But this merely reinforces the point that, as before, Russian policy makers wanted consultation not only because of the respect that it would accord Russia, but in order to prevent NATO action. This was clear from the fact that Yeltsin told Major and Kohl that Russia would do 'everything possible to end the fighting in Bosnia on the understanding that there [would] be no further bombing'.<sup>21</sup> As Vladimir Abarinov commented, Yeltsin had adopted 'a familiar pose, Moscow is not against air raids – it is against not being consulted'.<sup>22</sup>

That this was merely a 'pose' was shown at the ministerial level meeting of the Contact Group which took place at the end of May. According to Maksim Iusin,

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<sup>17</sup> Shchedrunova (27 May 1995); Leurdijk (1996), p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> *ITAR-TASS/Interfax* (26 May 1995).

<sup>19</sup> Shchedrunova (27 May 1995).

<sup>20</sup> *Interfax* (26 May 1995).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Abarinov (30 May 1995).



Kozyrev opposed categorically the inclusion in the final document of any possibility of further air strikes if the Serbs continued shelling towns and provoking the peace-keeping forces.<sup>23</sup> One of the diplomats accompanying Kozyrev confirmed that the Russian delegation had managed to 'minimise the demands' of its Western partners, including the proposed deployment of a 'rapid reaction' force to protect peace-keepers in Bosnia.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, the Western states proceeded to create such a force – the Rapid Reaction Force (RRF) – as a way of keeping UNPROFOR in Bosnia with better protection.<sup>25</sup> Russian officials were highly sceptical about this development, suspecting that the force was intended to allow more rigorous military action outside UN control. They insisted therefore that there be no radical change in the UNPROFOR mandate and that the RRF be under the control of the United Nations,<sup>26</sup> emphasising that the UN forces should not overstep the boundary between maintaining peace and imposing peace.<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, Russia abstained in the vote on UNSCR 998, which established the force. Lavrov explained Russia's position to the Security Council:

In principle, we favour enhancing the security of United Nations personnel, including through providing UNPROFOR with a rapid-reaction capability. Russia is as interested as others in ending the treacherous actions against peace-keeping personnel, whatever their source. But strengthening UNPROFOR's ability to protect the lives and safety of its peace-keepers should in no way make United Nations forces a party to the conflict.<sup>28</sup>

A declaration by the MFA gave a number of reasons for Russia's abstention: the resolution did not manage to avoid the impression that the RRF was directed against one of the Bosnian sides; it appeared to indicate to the sides in the conflict that the UN was ready to cross the boundary between peace-keeping and peace-making; and the presentation of the resolution for a vote in the UNSC was hasty, particularly since the financial implications were not clear and the Secretary-General's report on these had not yet been distributed to the Security Council members.<sup>29</sup>

Russian doubts about the intentions behind the creation of the RRF were probably justified. Although, in deference to Russia, the RRF was formally part of the on-going

<sup>23</sup> Iusin (31 May 1995).

<sup>24</sup> Abarinov (31 May 1995).

<sup>25</sup> Leurdijk (1996), pp. 70-1.

<sup>26</sup> Comments by Kozyrev, *ITAR-TASS* (5 June 1995a), and Karasin, *ITAR-TASS* (5 June 1995b).

<sup>27</sup> Comments by Karasin, *ITAR-TASS* (6 June 1995).

<sup>28</sup> United Nations Security Council (16 June 1995), p. 9.

<sup>29</sup> Russian Federation MFA (16 June 1995).



UN operation, in practice it was geared towards peace enforcement.<sup>30</sup> It was part of a process of creating the conditions for the use of force not only to implement UNSC resolutions, but to coerce the sides – that is, the Bosnian Serbs – to accept a peace plan based on the Contact Group proposals. In July, the ‘dual key’ arrangements were streamlined, so that the UN ‘key’ was held by the military command of UNPROFOR, and not by the UN Secretary-General’s envoy Yasushi Akashi. In June, UNPROFOR troops were withdrawn from all weapons collection points around Sarajevo in Bosnian Serb territory, so that the exclusion zone effectively no longer existed.<sup>31</sup> There was now less danger of UN peace-keepers being taken hostage in retaliation for air strikes. At the same time, the RRF would make the use of force more effective. Hence, UNPROFOR was not withdrawn, but it was re-configured and re-deployed to ensure that air power was a more effective option.

## **The fall of Srebrenica**

In April 1995, Serb forces besieging Srebrenica began to tighten their stranglehold on the town and prevented aid convoys from entering. In June, Muslim forces from the town raided and left in ruins two Serb villages in the Srebrenica vicinity. Serb forces responded with serious shelling and then closed in to take the town; by 9 July, they had surrounded and outnumbered the Dutch troops supposedly protecting the town, and taken thirty Dutch hostages from an observation post. The Bosnian Serbs then delivered an ultimatum: the United Nations and the Muslim population must evacuate the enclave within forty-eight hours. One Dutch peace-keeper was killed by a hand grenade as Muslims demanded effective defence from UNPROFOR. On the morning of 10 July, the Dutch commander, Colonel Karremans, requested air support, but this request was rejected by General Janvier. Karremans again called for air strikes at 6 p.m., and Janvier finally agreed later that evening. Fifty NATO planes were due to strike at 6 a.m. the following morning, but the final authorisation was not given and the planes eventually returned to base in Italy because they were short of fuel; subsequent reports suggest that the authorisation was not given because the request was made on the wrong form.<sup>32</sup> At 10.30 a.m., the Serbs again began shelling. Finally, Janvier authorised air strikes at midday; at 2.40 p.m. two Dutch planes dropped two bombs on Serb positions, destroying at most one tank. Serb shelling intensified and more air strikes were requested but were abandoned when the Serbs threatened to execute the hostages and to

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<sup>30</sup> Sloan (1998), pp. 72-3.

<sup>31</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> ‘A Cry from the Grave’ (27 November 1999).



shell refugees.<sup>33</sup> At 4.15 p.m., Mladić entered the town to claim it. His entry was filmed by Serb camera crews, and he recorded the following speech to the camera:

Here we are, on 11 July 1995 in Serbian Srebrenica just before a great Serb holy day. We give this town to the Serb nation. Remember the uprising against the Turks. The time has come to take revenge on the Muslims.<sup>34</sup>

Between 7,000 and 8,000 Muslim men were subsequently murdered:— either captured and executed, or shot and shelled as they attempted to escape to government-held territory.

Official Russian reactions to the attack on Srebrenica were similar to reactions to previous attacks on ‘safe areas’ and NATO air strikes. These reactions were patently inadequate in the circumstances, and reflected a lack of understanding of what was actually happening: policy makers were blinded by their suspicion of Western partiality and were confined by their insistence on ‘objectivity’. Karasin stated on 11 July that Russia shared the concerns expressed by the President of the UNSC (who had called for full observation of the status of the ‘safe areas’, declared that the UN would not accept actions directed against UNPROFOR personnel, and demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the Dutch hostages). He continued:

At the same time, we must state that the latest actions of the government forces, a direct result of which was the death of a Dutch serviceman from UNPROFOR, causes us deep concern. We consider them unacceptable.

In this context we again emphasise that adequate assessments must be given to the actions of all sides with the application of ‘uniform standards’.<sup>35</sup>

But the circumstances obviously did not demand ‘uniform’ action against both sides.

The following day, an MFA official described the NATO air strikes on a Bosnian Serb tank convoy near Srebrenica as ‘unjustified’:

These strikes were not necessary. The logic which guided those who decided to carry out the air strikes is incomprehensible. It was clear in advance that their effect would be the opposite to the expected one. That’s how it turned out: essentially, two Serb tanks were put out of action and the Serbs got Srebrenica in exchange.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*; Silber and Little (1996), pp. 345-349.

<sup>34</sup> ‘A Cry from the Grave’ (27 November 1999).

<sup>35</sup> Russian Federation MFA (11 July 1995).

<sup>36</sup> *Interfax* (12 July 1995).



On his interpretation of events, he is quite right to describe the strikes as ‘senseless’. But his interpretation is flawed; it appears to be based on the notion that a single set of air strikes that damaged two tanks which were already entering Srebrenica caused the Serbs to capture the town. Apparently, also, the strikes had threatened the lives of UNPROFOR servicemen: ‘In other words, the effect of the demonstration of force was absolutely incomparable to the cost of using it.’<sup>37</sup> Subsequent events suggest that the demonstration of force should have been more, not less, making its effect more comparable to the cost.

Again, Russian officials pointed to the failure to achieve demilitarisation, rather than addressing the reasons why the Serb forces were besieging the town in the first place. In the Security Council, Vasilii Sidorov condemned the actions of the Bosnian Serb army in Srebrenica and expressed Russia’s concern at the reports of ‘flagrant violations of the norm of international humanitarian law’. But he concluded:

The lesson to be learned from events in Srebrenica and Žepa is that we need to address directly the concept of safe areas and the modalities for implementing that concept. It is important to take steps to determine what kind of safe area is acceptable to both sides. The relevant agreements should include an agreement on the demilitarisation of all territories. If this had been done earlier, as Russia repeatedly proposed, the tragic events in and around Žepa and Srebrenica might have been avoided.<sup>38</sup>

This was at best a contorted lesson to learn. The clear lesson was that in a war situation, where one side was aiming to gain a particular piece of territory and remove the inhabitants, creating a besieged ‘safe area’ could only be a temporary, stop-gap measure, and the security of the population within the ‘safe area’ could be guaranteed only by providing a credible deterrent based on the deployment of sufficient troops and the readiness to use force. Russian diplomats did not address these points, and sought to prevent the development of a credible deterrent, all in the name of ‘objectivity’. Even after it was obvious that the Bosnian Serb forces had seized Srebrenica, Russian diplomats continued to insist on demilitarisation and reject the use of NATO air power. For example, Sidorov told the Security Council on 12 July:

Russia, like other members of the Security Council condemns the actions of the Bosnian Serb army in Srebrenica in violation of Security Council decision on safe

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> United Nations Security Council (10 August 1995), pp. 13-15. Žepa also had fallen to the Bosnian Serb army on 25 July.



areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina... We concur with the view on the need to restore the demilitarised status of the safe area of Srebrenica, which was also violated by the other side in the conflict.

Unquestionably, this task is extremely complex and should be resolved in a serious fashion. We must again note that the use of air power is not the road to a solution. Nor do we see a solution in the withdrawal of United Nations forces from Bosnia or a build-up of pressure by force, which would have serious adverse consequences, but rather in ensuring the secure and effective functioning of UNPROFOR.

We note that the draft resolution mandates the Secretary-General to use all resources available to him to restore the status as defined by the Agreement of 18 April 1993 of the safe area of Srebrenica in accordance with the mandate of UNPROFOR. It is clear that this provision precludes the option of using force which would exceed the context of the present mandate of a peace-keeping operation.

It is extremely important that any efforts to restore the safe area status not violate the impartiality of UNPROFOR and that they be fully consistent with present decision-making procedures and rules for conducting operations. We reaffirm that United Nations forces neither can be nor should undertake actions which would convert them into a party to the conflict.<sup>39</sup>

Sidorov did not explain how the status of 'safe area' was to be restored without the use of force, nor exactly what action Russia proposed in order to ensure the 'secure and effective functioning of UNPROFOR'.

The Russian government presented its position as 'objective'; as I shall argue in the conclusion, this was misguided in the circumstances and there are also reasons to believe that these claims were not entirely in good faith. In contrast, the opposition in Russia made little pretence of impartiality. On 12 July, the State Duma passed a declaration about 'NATO actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina' which stated that the Duma

resolutely condemns the new NATO air bombardments of the Bosnian Serbs in the region of Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Time and again a situation has arisen in which provocations by the forces of the so-called Muslim-Croat Federation have not received a response from the side of the West and the United

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<sup>39</sup> United Nations Security Council (12 July 1995), pp. 9-10.



Nations Organisation, causing answering actions by the Serb side, after which followed the one-sided military intervention of NATO forces.<sup>40</sup>

On the same day, the Duma passed on its second reading a resolution on ending Russian participation in the international sanctions against the FRY. But at no time did the Duma condemn the Srebrenica massacre. This contrasts with its reaction to the Croatian offensive in August, which it described as 'aggression' leading to the 'mass destruction of the peaceful population', and in which it demanded that the 'genocide' be stopped.<sup>41</sup>

Much of the reaction in the Russian press to the events in Bosnia was also myopic, in its obsession with Western partiality and refusal to recognise or criticise Bosnian Serb crimes. For example, Inga Svetlova wrote in *Rossiiskaia gazeta* that the NATO warplanes 'light-heartedly dropped several bombs on the Serbs, reportedly damaging one tank', which was proof of NATO's 'double standards'. She continued:

One could ... argue that the Serbs formally crossed the line of 'military decency' this time and did indeed encroach on the demilitarised zone. However, the immediate pretext for the strike was a report that the Serbs had arrested a group of Dutch soldiers, which turned out to be absolutely false.<sup>42</sup>

Even if we disregard the factual inaccuracy, the claim to 'objectivity' ultimately masks bias, since it demands a deliberate blindness to the reality of the Bosnian Serb intentions and the scale of their crimes. While she admitted that the Serbs 'do not conceal their intention to push further towards another Muslim enclave, Žepa', Svetlova wrote that the Bosnian Serb leadership was 'reacting to flagrant violations of the status and arrangements governing the six demilitarised regions agreed upon with the UN, while NATO prefers to close its eyes to the Muslims' violations and abuses but continually seeks to punish the Serbs for the slightest infraction'.<sup>43</sup>

Srebrenica was hardly the 'slightest' infraction, but many Russian observers refused to accept reports of the massacre as anything other than Muslim and Western propaganda. For example, in relation to the indictment of Mladić and Karadžić by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in November 1995, even the supposedly 'liberal' *Kommersant* daily cast doubt on the number of victims in Srebrenica and commented that 'UN observers who were in Srebrenica when the Serbs captured the town noted no instances of mass repression'.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (12 July 1995).

<sup>41</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (12 August 1995).

<sup>42</sup> Svetlova (13 July 1995).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> Smirnov (18 November 1995).



## The end of the great power concert

The major Western powers decided after the fall of Srebrenica and Žepa that any further attacks on the remaining 'safe areas' would be met with resolute force. A second London Conference took place at the end of July, where the Western powers attempted to formulate an effective military response to future Serb attacks but again met Russian opposition. Kozyrev boasted that the Russian delegation managed to turn the debate in the direction of peace and point it towards the discussion of political approaches; attempts to turn the meeting into some kind of 'conference for declaring aerial war' and to 'bind' Russia into a scenario based on force were unsuccessful.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, he admitted that it had not been possible to draw up a joint final statement. Vladimir Abarinov noted the significance of this: 'For the first time since it was created, the Contact Group was unable to adopt an agreed document.'<sup>46</sup>

The Western powers realised that it was now more feasible to use air power because there was less chance of reprisals against UNPROFOR after Srebrenica and Žepa had fallen and the peace-keepers left. There were still British and Ukrainian troops in Goražde, but they were withdrawn in August before the NATO air strikes began,<sup>47</sup> and an offer by Russia to provide peace-keepers in Goražde was rejected.<sup>48</sup> This did not mean that NATO would not respond to an attack on the town, but that it would use air power on a large scale, without being restricted by the threat of hostage-taking.<sup>49</sup> The intention clearly was to react to any Bosnian Serb attack on a 'safe area' with force, not just to defend the 'safe area', but to coerce the Bosnian Serbs to accept a peace settlement based on the Contact Group plan. The Western powers believed that recent events – the fall of Srebrenica and Žepa and the re-taking of Krajina by Croatian forces – had increased the prospects for peace, since apparently irresolvable problems had in effect been 'solved' by force.<sup>50</sup> The pattern of occupation was beginning to approximate the envisaged map and this process continued with Muslim-Croat gains.

Hence, on 1 August, British, French, and American generals warned Mladić that NATO and the United Nations would meet any further attacks on 'safe areas' with

<sup>45</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (22 July 1995).

<sup>46</sup> Abarinov (25 July 1995).

<sup>47</sup> Sloan (1998), p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> For the offer, see *Interfax* (26 July 1995); Yeltsin claimed that Russia had reached an agreement with Milošević and Mladić that Bosnian Serb forces would not enter Goražde and that Russia would send its peace-keepers there if absolutely necessary; *ITAR-TASS* (7 August 1995).

<sup>49</sup> Leuridijk (1996), p. 76.

<sup>50</sup> In contrast, Demurin argued that there was a danger that the situation in Croatia could get out of control, and disagreed with the view that the Croatian offensive created a favourable situation for a political settlement; Russian Federation MFA (8 August 1995b).



‘disproportionate’ and ‘overwhelming’ force.<sup>51</sup> Russian officials were well aware that such action was imminent, and that NATO was merely awaiting a pretext. In an interview in early August, Yeltsin remarked on the change in direction:

The UN peace-keeping forces have a clear-cut mandate to keep the peace. But recent decisions – to deploy a rapid reaction force with heavy weapons at its disposal, the preparation of plans for massive air strikes, and the switching of the ‘dual key’ principle to a technical level – increasingly indicate that the existing mandate is being changed. There is no doubt that all these actions fall under a mandate – of peace coercion. But any change in the mandate of the peace-keeping forces can only be made by a special decision of the UN Security Council.<sup>52</sup>

Attempting to avert such action, Russia increased its diplomatic activity. Even as early as June, Moscow had resumed relations with the Bosnian Serbs, with Churkin visiting Belgrade and Pale after the hostages were released. The MFA explained that it was striving to ‘make every effort to direct the situation towards a political settlement’.<sup>53</sup> On 27 July, Yeltsin sent an outline of the ‘Russian plan’ for a peaceful settlement to the leaders of the other Contact Group countries. Unfortunately, the plan contained few details and merely repeated Russia’s established position: commencement of a direct dialogue between the parties, practical implementation of proposals by the co-chairmen of the ICFY which envisaged the mutual recognition of the FRY and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the lifting of a significant proportion of the sanctions against the FRY.<sup>54</sup> Beyond this proposal to lift sanctions, Russian diplomats presented no clear programme of incentives and disincentives. The root problem with Russia’s diplomacy was expressed clearly by Pavel Fel’gengauer: ‘Moscow has neither a carrot nor a stick – it is not in a position to back up its diplomatic initiatives with promises of assistance or with a threat to use military force’.<sup>55</sup>

### **The domestic context**

The Russian government was attempting to maintain a compromise position between domestic pro-Serb pressure and international demands for action against the Bosnian Serbs. This had been possible during the previous year, but was more difficult after the recent developments in the conflicts and growing Western impatience to achieve a

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<sup>51</sup> Sloan (1998), p. 74.

<sup>52</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti* (10 August 1995). Obviously, Russia would not support such a decision; NATO therefore acted without a mandate.

<sup>53</sup> Abarinov (21 June 1995).

<sup>54</sup> Comments by Igor Ivanov, *Interfax* (27 July 1995).

<sup>55</sup> Fel’gengauer (12 August 1995).



peace settlement. The government's balancing act was criticised both by liberals and by nationalists in Russia. Liberals attacked Yeltsin and his government for continuing to protect the Bosnian Serbs which, as well as being morally objectionable, was not in Russia's interests. For example, Pavel Kandel' argued that the creation of a 'Greater Serbia' and a 'Greater Croatia' had been the purpose of the war from the beginning, but Russian foreign policy had 'reached the point of undisguised support for Serb claims'. He pointed out that 'support of the Greater Serbian ideal is incompatible with international law and with peace in the Balkans', and continued:

In any case, the Serbs are pursuing their own interests, however misunderstood. What is less understandable is why Russia should sacrifice its own interests for the Serbs. In 1914, this led to its being drawn into a war for which it was unprepared. But then Russia at least had a significant objective – the straits. What does Russia's support of Greater Serbian plans offer it today? they talk of an 'historical ally'. But what benefits can Russia expect to gain from an alliance with an international outcast?<sup>56</sup>

Iusin and Eggert shared this view that Yeltsin had 'unconditionally taken the side of the Serbs'. Furthermore, they questioned the possibility of a Russian mediating role: 'It is impossible to understand how Russia expects to play the role of mediator in the future when its leader has not demonstrated even a semblance of objectivity.'<sup>57</sup> Meanwhile, Fel'gengauer argued that Russia's policy in 'war-torn ex-Yugoslavia is determined first of all by domestic political considerations, as well as by the personal ambitions of individual politicians and diplomats'.<sup>58</sup> And Abarinov attacked Russia's policy of calling for sanctions to be lifted because of Belgrade's 'policy of peace': 'Milošević has not moved one step from his positions, and now the linkage with recognition of Bosnia has dissolved in the fog of general phrases about the peace-loving nature of Belgrade and Moscow.'<sup>59</sup>

Realist and nationalist commentators attacked the government from the other direction, accusing it of sacrificing Russia's own interests and the interests of the Serbs for the sake of Russia's relations with the West; they argued that Russia should lift sanctions unilaterally and offer the Serbs military support. For example, Elena Gus'kova criticised the government for not halting the move towards NATO force during the previous few months:

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<sup>56</sup> Kandel' (2-9 July 1995).

<sup>57</sup> Eggert and Iusin (12 August 1995).

<sup>58</sup> Fel'gengauer (12 August 1995).

<sup>59</sup> Abarinov (26 July 1995).



Russia silently swallowed the propaganda bait about NATO's new peace-making missions in Bosnia and Herzegovina and agreed to all of Washington's actions...

Unfortunately, the Russian President was far from resolute in condemning the shift to a forcible solution of Balkan problems.<sup>60</sup>

Referring to Yeltsin's attempt to 'regain the role of chief peace-maker in the blazing Balkans,' Evgenii Fadeev regretted that 'the world does not listen to Russia now':

Let us recall that throughout the bloody conflict in the Balkans, Russia has never yet decided on open confrontation with the West over the problems of the Serbs, a people with whom Russia is linked by close bonds that go back many centuries.<sup>61</sup>

Obviously, Fadeev believed that Russia should risk open confrontation with the West. Other nationalists believed that Russia, like the FRY government, was abandoning the Bosnian Serbs because of Western pressure. Such a view became common in the nationalist and communist press when NATO embarked on its air campaign at the end of August. An extreme example comes from *Zavtra* (as the nationalist newspaper *Den* had been renamed):

At this time of peril for the Serbs, when the German 'Luftwaffe' is shelling radar installations in Bosnia, when Croatian vultures are bombing columns of Krajina refugees, when fat and stupid America is preparing an invasion armada, when Milošević, who considers himself a Serb, is doing nothing, when 'Bill's and Helmut's friend' Yeltsin is behaving treacherously as usual, and when the perfidious Catholics, crafty Jews and the frenzied Muslims are throwing down the Orthodox Cross in the Balkans, – one incorruptible and splendid face shines its light on Russia and Serbia. Your face, brother Radovan; your face, friend Karadžić!<sup>62</sup>

## **The Sarajevo mortar attack and Operation 'Deliberate Force'**

The 'pretext' for NATO's air campaign turned out to be not Goražde, but Sarajevo. On 28 August 1995, a mortar exploded near the Markale market-place in which the mortar had landed in February 1994, this time killing thirty-seven people. Unlike in 1994, the UN investigators declared within twenty-four hours that the shell had been fired by the Bosnian Serbs. The Russian MFA accepted this conclusion although, after the NATO

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<sup>60</sup> Gus'kova (1 September 1995).

<sup>61</sup> Fadeev (12 August 1995).

<sup>62</sup> *Zavtra* (August 1995).



air campaign had continued for more than a week, Lavrov demanded more information about the investigation; having 'accepted the information' of the UN investigation 'on trust', Russia expected more explanations of the basis of its conclusions, 'especially since there have been reports in the press putting it into doubt'.<sup>63</sup>

One such report was by Gus'kova in an article in *Krasnaia zvezda*, in which she expressed strong scepticism about the investigation and its aims, and referred to the comment by the [Russian] commander of the UN peace-keeping forces in Sarajevo, Aleksandr Demurenko, that, for technical reasons, the likelihood of the shell being fired by Serb forces was 'one in a million'.<sup>64</sup> Gus'kova concluded that

[t]here is no doubt that the explosion in the Markale market-place was a planned action – planned this time even more thoroughly than in February 1994 – that was required as a pretext. Above all, for activating the mechanism of replacing UNPROFOR with NATO forces.<sup>65</sup>

Some officials also took up this theme. The Russian ambassador to the FRY, Gennadii Shikin, claimed that there had been 'no investigation as such' since the UN experts 'hastened to blame the Bosnian Serbs'.<sup>66</sup> And Grachev claimed on 14 September that it was 'now clear that the staged blast' was a pretext for the NATO campaign and 'the blame was hastily placed on the Bosnian Serbs, without any serious investigation'.<sup>67</sup> He was influenced, perhaps, by the comments of a Russian Defence Ministry officer who had just returned from the Balkans and was reported by *ITAR-TASS* as suggesting that the blast was the handiwork of NATO special services in an operation called 'Cyclone 2', and that the February 1994 blast was also a NATO plot, entitled 'Cyclone 1'.<sup>68</sup>

NATO responded to the mortar explosion by launching Operation 'Deliberate Force', a large-scale air campaign against Bosnian Serb military installations. The specific purpose was to re-establish the Sarajevo exclusion zone. Janvier outlined the demands of NATO and the UN authorities in a letter to Mladić on 3 September: no more attacks on the [remaining] 'safe areas', withdrawal to twenty kilometres from Sarajevo, freedom of movement for the UN and Non-Governmental Organisations

<sup>63</sup> Russian Federation MFA (8 September 1995).

<sup>64</sup> Gus'kova (1 September 1995); Demurenko's comments are also quoted in Marković (1996), p. 199.

<sup>65</sup> Gus'kova (1 September 1995).

<sup>66</sup> *Interfax* (30 August 1995).

<sup>67</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (14 September 1995).

<sup>68</sup> Platkovskii and Sychov (13 September 1995); the *Izvestiia* reporters found the report unconvincing, and instead accused the Russian intelligence ministries, supported by the Russian leadership, of inventing a mythical plot.



(NGOs), and unrestricted use of Sarajevo airport.<sup>69</sup> But the broader purpose of the operation was to coerce the Bosnian Serbs to the negotiating table, in correlation with an American diplomatic offensive.<sup>70</sup>

Russian policy makers might have accepted a *limited* NATO response to the mortar attack in order to re-establish the Sarajevo exclusion zone. For example, Igor Shcherbak, deputy director of the MFA's Department for International Organisations and Global Problems, suggested that the Serbs' 'barbaric' shelling of civilians in Sarajevo was precisely the sort of 'scandalous case' in response to which Russia considered punitive strikes by NATO to be appropriate.<sup>71</sup> But Russian diplomats certainly rejected any broader purpose. As Lavrov put it,

Russia ... condemned the barbaric shelling of the Sarajevo market and was the first to call for conducting an investigation and punishing those responsible. However, we feel that the reaction of the leadership of the UN and NATO forces to that action is clearly inappropriate. Above all, it exceeds the bounds of the situations in which the Security Council has authorised the use of force – the defence of peace-keeping forces, the protection of humanitarian convoys, and the containment of military threats to civilians. The Serbs have indeed created such a threat to Sarajevo. But instead of neutralising their gun emplacements that they used to shell the city, NATO has set about destroying the Serbs' military potential not only around Sarajevo, but throughout the entire theatre of military actions.<sup>72</sup>

Lavrov told the Security Council that NATO had seriously violated UNSC resolutions in five ways: the necessary consultations with Security Council members required by UNSCR 844 were not held; air and artillery strikes were disproportionate and applied on a wide scale without any decision by the UNSC to alter the principle of proportionality; the 'dual key' procedure had been abandoned since the UN could not halt the use of force if NATO did not agree; media reports suggested that a secret 'memorandum' had been made between NATO and the UN on the use of force, without the Security Council or countries with peace-keeping contingents in Bosnia (especially Russia) being informed; and the RRF's participation in attacks on Serb positions exceeded the limits of its mandate as defined by UNSCR 998.<sup>73</sup>

Once again, these complaints related to the lack of inclusion of Russia in the decision making process. Karasin told journalists that Russia had not been informed or

<sup>69</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 80.

<sup>70</sup> Sloan (1998), pp. 75-6.

<sup>71</sup> Velekhov (31 August 1995).

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Cheporov (6 September 1995).

<sup>73</sup> Russian Federation MFA (8 September 1995).



consulted before the NATO strikes began. Indeed, at the meeting of the Contact Group on 29 August, there was no serious discussion of the possibility of such actions, and the Russian representative gained the impression that all of the representatives saw the need to press on with the positive developments towards a peace settlement and not be diverted by the Sarajevo incident.<sup>74</sup> More generally, Russia was concerned at the bypassing of the UNSC and the implications this had for the international system and Russia's position within it. In order to reassert the Security Council's authority, Russia demanded a meeting of the UNSC, prepared a resolution demanding an end to the campaign (which was supported only by China and Nigeria), and called on the UN leadership to use its own authority to stop military actions.<sup>75</sup>

This concern with the procedure for decision making and the scale of the NATO air strikes is understandable: the action did abandon the principle of 'proportionality' and did exceed the existing mandate, and this decision was made by NATO with the support of the UN military command in Bosnia. But Russian concern went beyond the implications for UN decision-making and the lack of consultation with Russian representatives. David Owen writes that 'President Yeltsin criticised the NATO bombing but Russia was in effect acquiescent; they wanted proper consultation'.<sup>76</sup> This again implies that the Russian administration objected to lack of consultation, not the bombing campaign itself, which is simply not true. Russian policy makers wanted consultation not simply because they wanted to be involved in decision making, but also in order to prevent or veto such a campaign by NATO.

### **Reasons for Russian opposition to 'Deliberate Force'**

Diplomats gave a number of reasons why they opposed operation 'Deliberate Force'. Firstly, the MFA, pointing out that the bombing continued even after the Serbs had accepted the terms of the ultimatum, argued that there was 'no logic' to the NATO action and that it was purely 'punitive', with the aim of defeating the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>77</sup> Hence, NATO was entering the war on one side, whereas responsibility was borne by all sides.<sup>78</sup>

Secondly, Russian diplomats argued that the air campaign would hinder rather than promote the political process towards a settlement. An MFA declaration stated that the

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<sup>74</sup> Russian Federation MFA (31 August 1995a).

<sup>75</sup> Russian Federation MFA (31 August 1995b).

<sup>76</sup> Owen (1996), p. 357.

<sup>77</sup> Russian Federation MFA (5 September 1995).

<sup>78</sup> Russian Federation MFA (31 August 1995c).



only result of the NATO action would be a worsening and deepening of the conflict.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, the MFA claimed that the strikes risked damaging the positive changes that were taking place in relation to a political settlement,<sup>80</sup> although the only proof that it gave of these improvements was that the Bosnian Serbs had agreed, before the strikes began, to participate in negotiations as part of a single Yugoslav delegation.<sup>81</sup> In addition, Zotov claimed that it was wrong to think that bombing could force the Serbs to enter negotiations, echoing an opinion often expressed in the Russian nationalist press:

The supporters of this 'theory' are not familiar with local conditions or with the psychology of the Serbs. The greater the toughness towards and the pressure on the Bosnian Serbs, the fewer the chances of bringing their actions within the peace process and the more stubbornly they will resist.<sup>82</sup>

And Russian diplomats also argued that the one-sidedness of the action would encourage the Muslim-Croat Federation to fight on. Consequently, the action did not promote peace,<sup>83</sup> but instead provided the 'very catalyst' for the other side – the Muslim-Croat forces – to embark on an offensive.<sup>84</sup>

All of this, of course, contrasted with the opinion of Western policy makers, who believed that the air strikes would force the Bosnian Serbs to negotiate and accept a plan based on the Contact Group map, and also that the Muslim-Croat offensive promoted such a settlement because it made the balance of territory closer to that envisaged in the map. They were also aware of the danger of the Federation side abandoning the map and continuing the offensive, which is one reason why, contrary to Russian claims, the strikes, though large scale, were not aimed at destroying the Bosnian Serb army.<sup>85</sup>

Contrary to Owen, Russia did more than 'criticise' the NATO campaign: the MFA 'resolutely condemned' NATO's military actions and demanded that they end.<sup>86</sup> The MFA also argued that NATO was more concerned with its own role than with achieving a peaceful settlement. As I have already argued, by this stage NATO action 'out of area' in Bosnia was linked in Russian minds with NATO expansion into Central and Eastern Europe in three senses: it was in effect *de facto* expansion, it gave NATO a new role that reinforced its status and put it at the centre of the new European security arrangements, and such action might set a precedent for similar action in the former

<sup>79</sup> Russian Federation MFA (5 September 1995).

<sup>80</sup> Russian Federation MFA (31 August 1995b).

<sup>81</sup> Russian Federation MFA (8 September 1995).

<sup>82</sup> *Interfax* (1 September 1995).

<sup>83</sup> Russian Federation MFA (11 September 1995).

<sup>84</sup> Russian Federation MFA (14 September 1995).

<sup>85</sup> Leurdijk (1996), p. 80.

<sup>86</sup> Russian Federation MFA (5 September 1995).



Soviet Union. These three fears were evident in official reactions to Operation 'Deliberate Force'. At a wide-ranging press conference on 8 September, Yeltsin said that what was happening in Bosnia was 'only the first sign of what could happen if that organisation expanded... NATO is now showing what it is capable of'.<sup>87</sup> And he warned: 'When NATO comes right up to Russia's borders, one can count on there being two military blocs'.<sup>88</sup> In a similar vein, the MFA issued a declaration which stated:

one gets the impression that NATO, taking refuge behind statements of its attachment to a political solution, is in fact turning the long-suffering land of Bosnia into a testing ground for its 'new role' in European and international affairs.<sup>89</sup>

In an oblique reference to the Partnership for Peace programme, Yeltsin also warned that, if the action continued, Russia would have to reconsider its relations with the alliance.<sup>90</sup>

Official Russian statements revealed not only this anti-NATO stance, but also an increasingly pro-Serb approach which exaggerated the effects of the NATO bombing. This was most evident in a government declaration of 12 September:

Despite numerous protests, the NATO command continues to inflict bomb and rocket strikes on Serb positions in Bosnia. As a result of this action, innocent civilians are dying, including the most defenceless among them – children.

While nobody has calculated exactly the number of victims, there is no doubt that the tragic list is very long and is growing by the day. It is difficult to determine the number of children and young people who, as a consequence of the unjustified military actions, are without parents and without shelter. In this way, the survival of the present generation of Bosnian Serbs is put in doubt, and it is practically threatened with genocide.

The Russian Government resolutely protests against the harsh, one-sided use of the military power of NATO in Bosnia against the Serb population. We cannot remain indifferent to the tragic fate of the children of our brother-Slavs.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Zuichenko (9 September 1995).

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*; this comment was generally interpreted as implying the creation of a new military bloc – perhaps based on the CIS – to counter-act NATO expansion.

<sup>89</sup> Russian Federation MFA (12 September 1995a).

<sup>90</sup> Russian Federation MFA (7 September 1995).

<sup>91</sup> Russian Federation MFA (12 September 1995b).



## The domestic Russian response

This language was directed not just at the West, but also at a domestic audience. It was designed in part to appease the Duma, which reacted much as would be expected to the NATO action. On 9 September, the Duma passed a resolution in relation to the 'barbaric' NATO actions. It called on the President to insist on an immediate meeting of the UNSC to discuss the 'mass extermination of the Serbs and the responsibility of NATO for aggression in Bosnia and Herzegovina, causing the mass extermination of the civilian population'; to sign the laws on lifting sanctions against the FRY and imposing sanctions on Croatia, and consider military-technical co-operation with the FRY; to work out a joint position with Ukraine and Belarus and other members of the CIS and Balkan states; and to relieve Kozyrev of his duties for 'the many mistakes that he has made and that have led to the humiliating failure of Russian diplomacy in the Balkans and to the discrediting of the Russian Federation, its President and its parliament'.<sup>92</sup>

Opposition to the NATO action came from across the political spectrum. Lukin regretted that Russia and the US did not act as partners in resolving the Balkan crisis because 'the US defines what is good for Russia (both in implementing the US plan for Bosnia and in deciding on the expansion of NATO) and acts in accordance with its own interests'; and he used the familiar argument against NATO action that it would 'have a negative effect on the Russian democratic process and the natural outcome of the elections'.<sup>93</sup> The Duma Speaker, Ivan Rybkin, a member of the Agrarian party, believed that the Russian government had to take 'all the necessary measures' to stop the bombing so that there would be 'no more bombing with impunity'.<sup>94</sup> Zhirinovskii claimed that a 'normal foreign minister' in Moscow would have prevented the NATO action; he claimed that he himself would have recalled the Russian ambassadors from NATO countries, equipped the Serbs with anti-aircraft systems, and sent Russian warships to the Adriatic.<sup>95</sup> Another future presidential candidate, Aleksandr Lebed, claimed that 'NATO's true face' had been shown in the Bosnian crisis, arguing that NATO was 'holding Russia at gunpoint'; Russia was left without allies and without friends, and 'only a nuclear shield [could] save it from aggression from the West'.<sup>96</sup> The chairman of the State Duma Committee for CIS Affairs, Konstantin Zatulin, joined the

<sup>92</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (9 September 1995).

<sup>93</sup> *Interfax* (15 September 1995).

<sup>94</sup> Krasulin (12 September 1995).

<sup>95</sup> *Interfax* (13 September 1995a).

<sup>96</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (9 September 1995).



attack on Kozyrev, claiming that, since the Serb side regarded most Russian diplomats and Kozyrev 'with total distrust', the minister's resignation was needed to 'restore the confidence of our traditional ally'.<sup>97</sup>

Zatulin was one of a delegation of Duma deputies that travelled to former Yugoslavia in order to collect information about the consequences of the NATO air strikes for the Serbs in Bosnia and about the 'genocide' committed against the Serbs in Krajina. The leader of the delegation, Sergei Glotov, said that 'the world must learn the whole truth about the Yugoslav crisis and not be guided merely by reports in the Western press which accuse the Serbs in a biased way of atrocities which they have allegedly committed'.<sup>98</sup> After the visit, the deputies held a press conference in which they described the UN stance in the Balkans conflicts as an attempt to 'create a mono-polar structure of the world', and called for immediate Russian military aid to the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>99</sup> A second delegation visited Yugoslavia a few days later, this time headed by Rybkin; the deputies stressed that their visit, and that of previous delegations, symbolised moral support to Yugoslavia, although their primary goal was 'to contribute to the settlement of the crisis'. Yugoslav parliamentarians said that they appreciated highly the 'principled and objective position of the State Duma since the outbreak of the Yugoslav crisis' and its 'huge efforts to end the crisis'.<sup>100</sup>

Yet, even in the Duma, opinion was not unanimous. One delegate on this visit disassociated himself from the majority's 'principled and objective' position: Sergei Iushenkov, chairman of the Duma Defence Committee, criticised the Duma's one-sided approach which, in his opinion, failed to serve Russia's strategic interests but instead benefited reactionary generals and the military-industrial complex, as well as nationalist and orthodox-communist forces that intended to use anti-Western hysteria in the forthcoming election campaign. Iushenkov noted that the position of unconditional support for the Bosnian Serbs taken by the Duma in relation to Bosnia was fully matched in Yugoslavia itself only by the Serbian Radical Party, which was the equivalent of the LDPR.<sup>101</sup> This last point was certainly correct; on 22 October, Zhirinovskii and the leader of the Serbian Radical Party, Vojislav Šešelj, signed in Belgrade an agreement on political alliance of the two parties.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *Interfax* (18 September 1995).

<sup>98</sup> *ITAR-TASS/Russian Public TV/Russia TV Channel* (14 September 1995).

<sup>99</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (19 September 1995).

<sup>100</sup> *Tanjug* (25 September 1995).

<sup>101</sup> *Rodin* (4 October 1995).

<sup>102</sup> *Tanjug* (22 October 1995).



## Differing responses within the administration

The administration unanimously opposed the NATO action. Nevertheless, there were some differences between the governmental branches over how to respond. President Yeltsin followed his populist instincts and echoed the nationalist rhetoric of the Duma and some elements of the press. This was particularly evident in his press conference of 8 September:

These bombings are inadmissible. Taking into account Russian-Serbian relations, we must respond appropriately to the actions of the Croats and the Croatian [*sic*] Muslims, by helping the Serbs.

On Thursday [7 September] I signed a decree providing humanitarian aid to the Bosnian Serbs, and we are already helping them. The longer things go on, the greater the aid. And then we shall see; if such actions continue, it could come to something hotter [*delo doidet do bolee goriachego*].<sup>103</sup>

This rhetoric was designed in part to assuage criticism from the Duma. So too was his attack on the work of the MFA, which was reminiscent of October 1992 when the administration's foreign policy had also been subjected to criticism. Yeltsin again declared that he was not satisfied with the MFA's performance, and reported that at a recent meeting of the MFA collegium he had 'stated bluntly what its mistakes and shortcomings were and in what way Russia was losing ground in the international arena on account of the ministry's performance'.<sup>104</sup> In his view, responsibility for this lay with Kozyrev, who, he said, 'hasn't been around lately and is always flying around somewhere'.<sup>105</sup> The following month, it was widely reported that Yeltsin was still dissatisfied with the MFA's work and was looking for an appropriate candidate to replace Kozyrev.<sup>106</sup>

The Russian Defence Ministry adopted a stance defined mostly by its anti-NATO aspect but also reflecting support for the Serbs. The latter was shown by a three-day visit to 'Republika Srpska' by a delegation from the Defence Ministry, led by the Deputy Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-General Vladimir Zhurbenko, which went to observe the effects of the NATO campaign and the Muslim-Croat offensive. The delegates met Mladić and Karadžić, for whom the visit was 'a sign of friendship and understanding of the Russian people and an expression of their support for the just struggle of the Serbs

<sup>103</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti* (9 September 1995).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Zuichenko* (9 September 1995).

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, *Interfax* (19 October 1995) and *Dardykin* (20 October 1995).



in the Serb republic'.<sup>107</sup> The Defence Ministry's anti-NATO attitude was evident in the linkage made between the NATO campaign and Russia's relations with the alliance. For example, Grachev warned his American counterpart, William Perry, that continued NATO action would extend the conflict beyond the Balkans; in these conditions, Russia would be compelled to review its approach towards the Partnership for Peace programme, and Russia's implementation of a number of international treaties in the military field might also be affected by the NATO action in order for Russia to preserve its state national security.<sup>108</sup> One practical effect of this division was the postponement of joint Russian-American military exercises; as Grachev explained to the press, while a war was underway and the Bosnian Serbs were being bombed, 'it wouldn't be healthy' to hold joint exercises, 'the people simply would not understand us'.<sup>109</sup>

As we have seen, the MFA also was categorically opposed to the NATO operation, and likewise admitted that Russia might have to end the programme of co-operation with NATO if differences over its use of force in Bosnia remained.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, the MFA avoided siding openly with the Bosnian Serbs, and tried to diminish the impact of the crisis on relations with the West. Kozyrev in particular attempted to calm emotions in Russia and to prevent an outright split with NATO and the members of the Contact Group. In addition to criticising NATO, he launched a counter-attack against his domestic opponents; rather than adopt a low profile in the face of attacks from the Duma and even the President, he conducted a series of television interviews. On 6 September, he accused the Duma of attempting to 'prove itself' in Bosnia instead of tackling pressing domestic legislation, and of advocating a foreign policy in which Russia would be 'tossed between isolation and confrontation'.<sup>111</sup> The following day, he pointed out that most of the other members of the international community, including neutral and developing countries, believed that the NATO air strikes were legitimate, and also pointed out that the strikes were a consequence of a request from the UN; hence, Russia's voice sounded 'rather lonely', yet the Duma expected the administration to 'enter confrontation with the rest of the world'. Instead, Kozyrev defended a pragmatic approach:

Yes, we are against the NATO operation but we can see reality. We are advocating our position but we are not going into confrontation with the whole world around

<sup>107</sup> *Bosnian Serb News Agency SRNA* (30 September 1995); *Tanjug* (2 October 1995).

<sup>108</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (11 September 1995).

<sup>109</sup> Karapetian (27 September 1995).

<sup>110</sup> Comment of Gorelik, *Radio Russia* (7 September 1995).

<sup>111</sup> *Russia TV* (6 September 1995).



us. And we continue the most important thing, that is, our political efforts to get the situation back on peaceful tracks.<sup>112</sup>

Kozyrev singled out Vladimir Lukin for criticism, accusing him of having 'no suggestions apart from criticising the government', which basically 'left the road clear' for Zhirinovskii.<sup>113</sup> This attack was not merely a reflection of the history of tensions between the two men; Kozyrev also felt frustrated that other 'reformers' were taking such a negative stance, although, as I have argued, it was consistent with their neo-realist outlook. This was also shown by the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy (CFDP), a think-tank of state centric academics and politicians, which blamed the 'failed policies of the present Russian MFA' for the fact that Russia was threatened 'more than ever' and its position on important international problems simply 'spat on'.<sup>114</sup>

Kozyrev's policy was the only feasible approach that could allow Russia to maintain reasonable relations with the West and still express opposition to the air strikes and exert pressure on NATO to halt them. A more pro-Serb policy would, indeed, have left Russia in international isolation, with even the FRY now recognising that America was the key international player. This pragmatic policy, of course, would never satisfy the Duma, for political and ideological reasons. As Abarinov put it:

No matter how the President tries to soothe the lawmakers, nothing will be enough for them. The stakes in this game are too high for them to be satisfied with symbolic gestures. Another issue is that on the threshold of elections, the Duma will not be satisfied with any measures, even a declaration of war on NATO.<sup>115</sup>

Behind the populist rhetoric and the increasingly incoherent and erratic comments, Yeltsin also recognised that partnership with the West was not worth abandoning for the sake of the Bosnian Serbs. Such a move would be neither in Russia's interests nor in his own political interests, since he had placed so much emphasis on relations with the West during his presidency. After Yeltsin summoned the ministers involved in foreign and defence policy to a meeting in Sochi, Kozyrev claimed that he had received a mandate from the President, and that Yeltsin's earlier criticism was 'in a way an expression of confidence' showing that he expected the minister 'to make amends'. And certainly, if his account of Yeltsin's instructions was accurate, then Yeltsin had in fact endorsed Kozyrev's own line:

<sup>112</sup> *Russian Public TV* (7 September 1995).

<sup>113</sup> *Russian Public TV* (11 September 1995).

<sup>114</sup> Karpov (3 October 1995).

<sup>115</sup> Abarinov (8 September 1995).



we shall continue our struggle, but the president has given a clear instruction: to act within the bounds of international law, not to lapse into confrontation, but to argue for our interests through co-operation and partnership with the world around us.<sup>116</sup>

### Conciliatory moves

Consequently, the MFA's more moderate approach prevailed and, as soon as the NATO air strikes were suspended after two weeks, Moscow began to make conciliatory gestures and more moderate statements aimed at boosting international co-operation and Russian involvement in the peace process. For instance, coinciding with a visit to Moscow by the US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott, Yeltsin vetoed the Duma laws on lifting sanctions.<sup>117</sup> On 13 September, a senior MFA official was reported as stating that despite the 'complexity of the situation' in Bosnia, Russia's position on the 'political settlement of the conflict and on the very possibility of such a settlement' was basically similar to that of the Western countries.<sup>118</sup> Certainly, the major powers still favoured a settlement based on a 51:49 per cent division of the territory, as the Contact Group had always proposed.

Igor' Ivanov made it clear that Russia's sharp criticism of the NATO strikes did not mean that it intended to stop its work in the Contact Group, nor that there was 'any threat' of a split in the group.<sup>119</sup> The same applied to the Security Council; by 22 September, Moscow was expressing satisfaction with the 'spirit of interaction' finally developing among the UNSC members after the Security Council had, on Russia's initiative, adopted Resolution 1016 which demanded that the Bosnian and Croatian government forces end their offensive.<sup>120</sup> As I have suggested, this coincided with Western diplomatic aims, but the Western governments also supported the resolution because they realised that Russia needed to be treated delicately and to be encouraged to continue co-operating.

Hence, as Bovt and Kalashnikova wrote in *Kommersant* daily, everything was 'proceeding as if Boris Yeltsin had never made any harsh statements with confrontational overtones about NATO, and NATO had never responded to them with perfect equanimity'.<sup>121</sup> Although Yeltsin again attacked NATO's policy in Bosnia and in Eastern Europe at the fiftieth anniversary session of the United Nations General

<sup>116</sup> *Russian Public TV* (24 September 1995).

<sup>117</sup> Bovt and Kalashnikova (16 September 1995).

<sup>118</sup> *Interfax* (13 September 1995b).

<sup>119</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (13 September 1995).

<sup>120</sup> *Interfax* (22 September 1995).

<sup>121</sup> Bovt and Kalashnikova (16 September 1995).



Assembly,<sup>122</sup> at the subsequent summit meeting between Clinton and Yeltsin at Hyde Park (USA), both presidents were intent on demonstrating that partnership between Russia and the West had been preserved.<sup>123</sup> As in February 1994, Russian diplomats, while insisting that they had been right to object to NATO's actions, sought to play down the differences in the hope of encouraging reconciliation and establishing a heightened Russian role.

This was evident in comments by Sergei Lavrov, interviewed on *Itogi* news programme. He began by stating:

We are in no doubt that NATO exceeded the powers which it received from the Security Council ... and this is alarming, not only from the point of view of the Bosnian crisis, but it has wider implications for the future.

But, later in the interview, he denied that Russia had 'quarrelled with America':

I do not think the differences are insurmountable. I am not a champion of calls for slamming the door, although very many questions do arise, not only regarding Bosnia, but regarding how the partnership is to continue to be built.

Indeed, this whole episode, if we disregard the purely Bosnian angle, is important from the point of view of learning lessons for the future, in that a partnership presupposes the absence of surprises, and we reached agreement on that long ago.<sup>124</sup>

These comments were almost identical to those made by Kozyrev after the Sarajevo crisis the previous year.

## **The road to Dayton**

The administration's fear that Russia would be isolated internationally led it to retreat from the more anti-Western stance that it had adopted during the NATO air strikes. Once again, it tried to demonstrate Russia's importance in the peace-making process through the Contact Group, the UNSC, and diplomatic activity in the Balkans, and to re-establish the great power co-operative approach. To a certain extent, the United States was prepared to make gestures to mollify Russian self-importance; nevertheless, as with the NATO air campaign, it was prepared to act unilaterally when necessary. Russia had little choice but to accept the results of the American diplomatic offensive led by Richard Holbrooke, particularly since the Balkan presidents now recognised that

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<sup>122</sup> Russian Federation MFA (22 October 1995).

<sup>123</sup> Comments by the Russian President's Assistant, Dimitrii Riurikov; Riurikov (28 October 1995).

<sup>124</sup> *NTV* (17 September 1995).



Holbrooke was leading the negotiations. Russian diplomats continued to stress the importance of Russia to the peace process, with increasingly exaggerated claims. American diplomats made certain symbolic gestures to allow Russian – and European – pride to be assuaged, although they too were not immune from making exaggerated claims about their own significance and comments that belittled the efforts of other states and negotiators.

Holbrooke launched his shuttle diplomacy on 15 August, and it was soon reinforced by Operation ‘Deliberate Force’. The first break-through was a Serb withdrawal from the Sarajevo exclusion zone which was followed by a suspension of NATO air strikes. Negotiations eventually led to a cease-fire agreement, which was due to come into effect on 10 October. Russian diplomats claimed primary responsibility for both of these achievements; as in February 1994 – but with less legitimacy – they claimed that their own diplomacy, rather than the NATO air strikes, had achieved the Serb withdrawal. Kozyrev claimed that NATO’s decision to suspend the bombing for three days was reached as a result of efforts made in Moscow (where Milošević met Yeltsin) and in the region itself, where Igor’ Ivanov was also engaged in intensive diplomatic activity.<sup>125</sup> Ivanov did not miss the opportunity to elevate his own status; speaking in Geneva, he told journalists that the end of the NATO air strikes and the Serb withdrawal was achieved ‘largely thanks to Russian efforts’:

Our trip to Belgrade was mostly aimed at stopping the NATO air strikes. This was a part of Russia’s efforts in a larger scale at the political level and in diplomacy...

Richard Holbrooke’s mission is a concrete practical result of this work done by Russia. This is a practical reply to the sceptical statements that Russia’s voice is not heeded.<sup>126</sup>

Again, this resembled Churkin’s comments the previous February, although the Russian role then was less disputable.

The associated boast that Russian diplomacy was instrumental in creating progress in negotiations on a peace plan was even more inflated, given the rival claim of the shuttle diplomacy conducted by Holbrooke. According to Kozyrev, speaking on 11 September,

the scenario for a political settlement was set out in the president’s statement on the outcome of his talks with President Milošević. And everything that has been achieved so far – and much has been achieved – has all been achieved due to and,

<sup>125</sup> Bovt and Kalashnikova (16 September 1995).

<sup>126</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (16 September 1995).



to put it frankly, on the basis of the talks which took place in Moscow. Firstly, there was a single delegation led by Milošević. Secondly, the Contact Group itself, which includes the West, has recognised the equality of the rights of the Muslims and Croats and the Bosnian Serbs. And thirdly, and I consider this very important, the West, not just the Bosnian Serbs, has now recognised the central role of Belgrade and the need to lift sanctions.<sup>127</sup>

Russian scepticism of the novelty of Holbrooke's proposed plan was more justified. This scepticism was explained by Andrei Stakhov in *Segodnia*: 'As Moscow sees it, the popularity of American mediator Richard Holbrooke is largely undeserved: the territorial demarcation plan was worked out by the contact group a year ago, and now the cunning Americans are claiming the fruits of a common effort as their own.'<sup>128</sup> This was a valid criticism, since the American proposals and the Dayton accords themselves were a development of the Contact Group plan. On the other hand, the American initiative was significant because it was backed by NATO force and coincided with the Muslim-Croat offensive, which gave a strong incentive to the Bosnian Serbs to accept a cease-fire and negotiations on the basis of the plan. Russian policy makers refused to recognise that the important issue was not the details of the peace plan – on which the international community had already agreed – but how to get all of the sides to accept it.

There were also exaggerated claims by the Russians in relation to the cease-fire. Bosnian Prime Minister, Haris Silajdžić, met the Russian Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, in Moscow on 2 October, and requested the renewal of gas supplies as 'Russia's substantial contribution to the normalisation of life in ... Sarajevo, and the achievement of a cease-fire on the entire Bosnian territory'.<sup>129</sup> The Bosnian government then put the renewal of gas and electricity supplies to Sarajevo as one of the conditions for a cease-fire.<sup>130</sup> Chernomyrdin confirmed Russia's readiness to resume supplies, and the decision was announced on 6 October by Yeltsin, who described it as a 'concrete and substantive contribution' to the attainment of a cease-fire.<sup>131</sup> Kozyrev stated on the same day: 'I cannot conceal my satisfaction that the [cease-fire] agreement was reached with Russia's most active, if not decisive, participation'.<sup>132</sup>

A period of wrangling over the conditions of the resumption of supplies then followed, which delayed the beginning of the cease-fire. The Russian side had

<sup>127</sup> *Russian Public TV* (11 September 1995).

<sup>128</sup> Stakhov (22 September 1995).

<sup>129</sup> *Interfax/ITAR-TASS/Ekho Moskvy Radio* (2 October 1995).

<sup>130</sup> Holbrooke (1998), pp. 194-6.

<sup>131</sup> *Rossiiskaia gazeta* (7 October 1995).

<sup>132</sup> *ITAR-TASS/Interfax* (6 October 1995).



previously proclaimed the importance of the gas supplies for the cease-fire; now, a senior Russian diplomat condemned attempts to link the cease-fire to Russian gas supplies to Sarajevo as 'inappropriate and provocative'.<sup>133</sup> Russian diplomats gave a number of explanations for the delay: technical problems with filling the pipe and increasing the pressure in it; the need to obtain consent from the UN Committee on Sanctions and from Ukraine and Hungary (across whose territory the pipe-line passes); confusion about who to deal with in Sarajevo; a lack of co-ordination between Russian departments; the fact that Gazprom, as a private company, was not under political control and therefore depended on an appropriate instruction from Gazprom chiefs that initially was not forthcoming; and the fact that the Bosnian delegation arrived in Moscow only on the evening of 9 October.<sup>134</sup> The most likely explanation was that Gazprom did not want to recommence deliveries until the form of payment was agreed; in November, delivery of gas to the FRY for humanitarian purposes was also delayed for four days due to problems with the means of payment.<sup>135</sup>

Whichever reason applied, a Russian MFA official declared on 10 October that it was 'immoral to blame Moscow for the disruption of the cease-fire in Bosnia, which was due to begin at 0000 on 10th October. This is like passing the buck.'<sup>136</sup> Yet Russia was happy to accept the buck and take the credit when gas supplies were resumed and the cease-fire began. According to Zotov:

By agreeing to resume gas supplies to Bosnia, Russia played the key role in achieving the cease-fire agreement. The political decision on resumption of gas supplies to Bosnia was taken before the terms of payment were co-ordinated. This is Russia's noticeable contribution to the settlement process. It outweighs what has been done by other countries, which boast of their generosity in relation to Bosnia.<sup>137</sup>

And, a week later, Kozyrev told an interviewer that the cease-fire had 'shown the material aspect of Russian diplomacy ... as nothing would have come of it without our gas ... our gas was of decisive importance'.<sup>138</sup> On his part, Holbrooke later seemed intent on minimising the Russian role, and the role of other mediators, even making the point that his cease-fire agreement with Izetbegović was reached after Ivanov and Bildt

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<sup>133</sup> *Interfax* (9 October 1995).

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*; *Ekho Moskvyy News Agency* (9 October 1995); Russian Federation MFA (9 October 1995).

<sup>135</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (16 November 1995).

<sup>136</sup> *Interfax* (10 October 1995).

<sup>137</sup> *Interfax* (11 October 1995).

<sup>138</sup> *NTV* (15 October 1995).



had left for other meetings.<sup>139</sup> He described the gas issue as an 'unexpected side issue' and a 'frustrating subplot'.<sup>140</sup>

This retrospective mutual belittlement by Russian policy makers and Richard Holbrooke continued during the period up to the Dayton talks. Russia chaired a meeting of the Contact Group in Moscow from 16-17 October, which Ivanov described as 'extremely productive', involving consideration of a 'wide-range of problems'.<sup>141</sup> For Holbrooke, this meeting took place only because 'Moscow wanted its moment in the limelight'.<sup>142</sup> His description of the Moscow meeting is equally patronising: 'The Russians were pleased at their first opportunity to act as host for the Contact Group. But the meetings, held at the Foreign Ministry, were confused and shapeless; the Russians, not used to running international meetings, had no set agenda.'<sup>143</sup> Carl Bildt, on the other hand, was impressed by the speed with which they got down to work: 'The Russians were keen to do business, and so were we'.<sup>144</sup>

Russia also insisted on hosting a preparatory summit meeting of the presidents of Yugoslavia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina prior to the Dayton talks, primarily to boost the government's and President's prestige before the Duma elections. Clinton and Talbott, still eager to support Yeltsin, agreed (apparently after Yeltsin had promised them that they would restrict it to a 'photo op' with Yeltsin), although Holbrooke had doubts about the proposal because it would delay the start of Dayton by a day and 'risked derailing or delaying the negotiating process, notwithstanding the Russian pledge to stay away from substance'.<sup>145</sup> As it turned out, somewhat to the Americans' relief, Yeltsin suffered a heart attack on 25 October and the meeting was cancelled.

## Dayton

By the 'General Framework Agreement' negotiated in Dayton, Ohio, and signed formally in Paris, Bosnia and Herzegovina would continue as a sovereign state within its existing internationally recognised borders. It would be composed of two entities: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Republika Srpska, with a ratio of territory of 51:49 (map 10). Sarajevo was re-unified within the Federation, and Goražde was linked to the Federation by a secure land corridor. The final status of Brčko would be determined by arbitration; previously with a Muslim majority, it had been taken by the

<sup>139</sup> Holbrooke (1998), p. 195.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 196, 202.

<sup>141</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (18 October 1995).

<sup>142</sup> Holbrooke (1998), p. 201.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

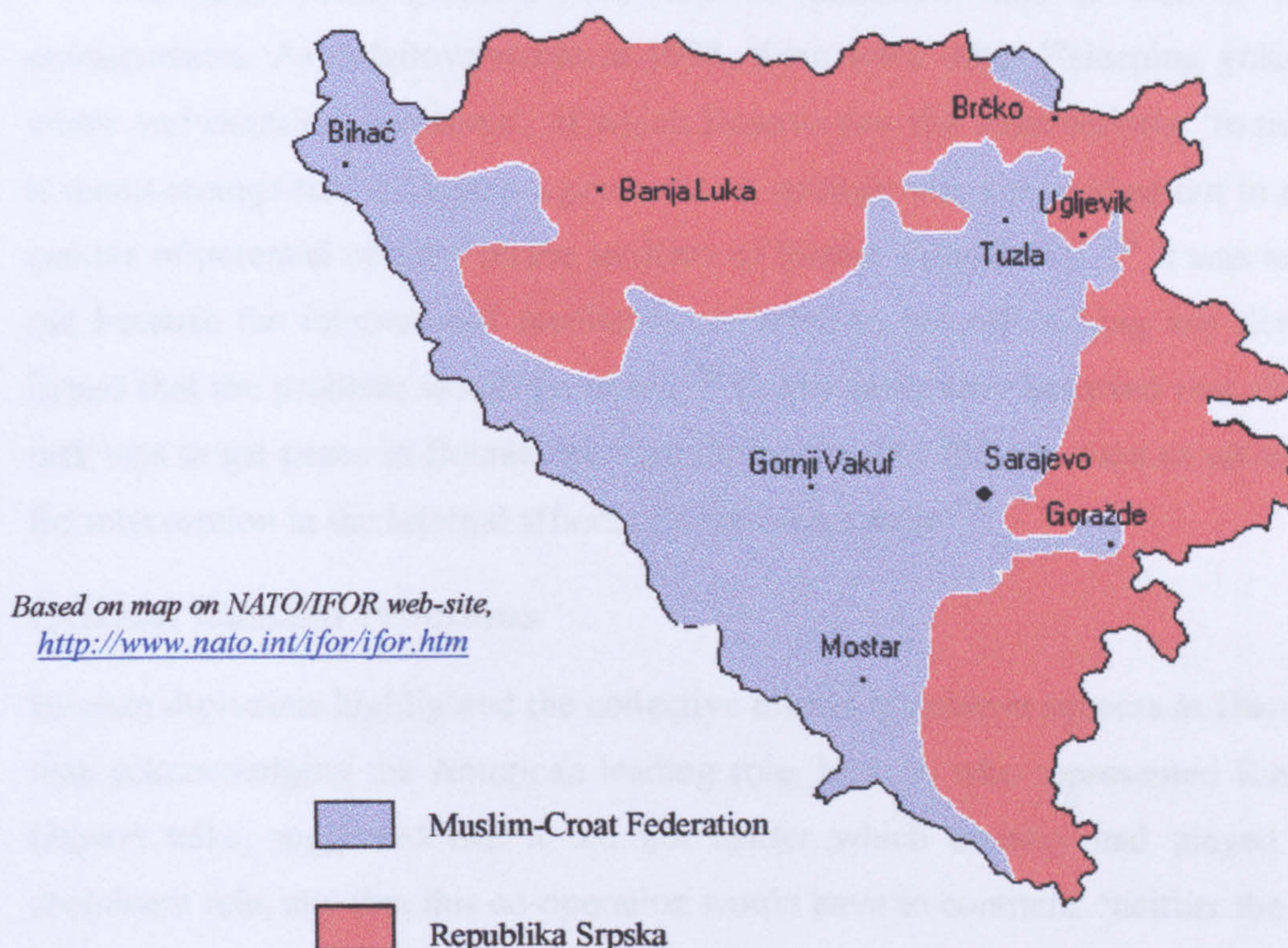
<sup>144</sup> Bildt (1998), pp. 113-4.

<sup>145</sup> Holbrooke (1998), pp. 209, 213-214.



Serbs during the war and was viewed by them as strategically crucial in securing the Posavina corridor between the two parts of Republika Srpska. (Brčko was finally apportioned to the Federation several years after Dayton). Forces from both sides would withdraw to two kilometres from the 'line of separation' between the entities within thirty days of the Accords being signed. Elections would take place within a year, with refugees able to vote in their pre-war place of residence. All parties were compelled to 'co-operate fully' with war crimes investigators.<sup>146</sup>

**Map 10** The two entities of Bosnia-Herzegovina



## Domestic Russian reactions

The Duma broadly welcomed the political and territorial arrangements for bringing peace, but – like the administration – believed that sanctions should have been lifted completely and should not have been linked to the issue of the arms embargo (see below).<sup>147</sup> Many commentators were more critical, claiming that the Accords violated the vital interests of the Bosnian Serbs by not giving them Brčko, by re-uniting

<sup>146</sup> *War Report* (1995); Dayton, *The General Framework Agreement* (1995).

<sup>147</sup> Russian Federation State Duma (8 December 1995).



Sarajevo, by not lifting the indictments of Mladić and Karadžić, by not lifting sanctions permanently, and because Republika Srpska would possess no more than twenty per cent of the industrial potential of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They also claimed that Russia had 'betrayed' the Serbs, especially by putting pressure on Milošević.<sup>148</sup>

But the agreements should be criticised most for rewarding 'ethnic cleansing'. Any deal based on partition would do this, of course. Yet, the Dayton Agreements were worse than the Contact Group plan, most disturbingly by allowing the Bosnian Serbs to keep Srebrenica and Žepa. The deficit was made up by allowing the Federation to keep Serb areas in north-western Bosnia that it had seized in the recent offensive.

The other main problem was one of omission, and it was to have dire consequences. As Arbatova wrote in 1998, there were other "sleeping volcanoes" of ethnic and territorial problems', of which Kosovo was the most serious: 'In this context it seems strange that at Dayton a preventative strategy was not worked out in relation to centres of potential conflict on the territory of former Yugoslavia'.<sup>149</sup> It was not worked out because the international mediators preferred to put off making any decision and hoped that the problem would go away;<sup>150</sup> in any case, they believed that the pressing task was to get peace in Bosnia. Russian diplomats also did not want to set a precedent for intervention in the internal affairs of a sovereign state.<sup>151</sup>

## Official Russian reactions

Russian diplomats highlighted the collective efforts to achieve success at Dayton, rather than acknowledging the American leading role. Ivanov, who represented Russia at the Dayton talks, suggested that it did not matter which country had played the most prominent role, and that this co-operation would have to continue: 'neither the European powers, nor the USA, can now resolve anything in the former Yugoslavia on its own – only together'.<sup>152</sup> And Lavrov told the Security Council:

The Russian Federation welcomes the initialling in Dayton by the parties to the Bosnian conflict of the package of documents on the peace settlement in Bosnia and Herzegovina. A major step has been taken towards a comprehensive settlement of the most tragic conflict to have taken place in post-war Europe. Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and the European Union,

<sup>148</sup> Vasil'evskii (8 December 1995); Gus'kova (1998a); Stepanova (1996); Volobuev and Tiagunenkov (1997).

<sup>149</sup> Arbatova (1998b), p. 80.

<sup>150</sup> On Russia's contribution to this procrastination, see Levitin (2000).

<sup>151</sup> Remington (1994), pp. 161-2; Russian Federation MFA (17 August 1995).

<sup>152</sup> Ivanov (1995).



acting in concert in the framework of the Contact Group, have done some solid work. The United Nations assistance at various stages of the peace process was an important factor in achieving progress.<sup>153</sup>

Lavrov's speech demonstrates Russia's positive evaluation of the Dayton accords. Russian diplomats were satisfied both with the political arrangements and the territorial division. Furthermore, they welcomed a peaceful agreement on Eastern Slavonia, especially as the Croatian government had threatened to re-capture the region by force if a deal was not reached by 30 November 1995;<sup>154</sup> Russia would also keep its peace-keeping battalion stationed there.<sup>155</sup>

Disagreements between Russia and the other members of the Contact Group arose not over these political and territorial issues, where there had always been broad agreement, but over those areas that had always been a source of discord: sanctions, the arms embargo, and military aspects.

### **Sanctions and the arms embargo**

Russian diplomats wanted sanctions against the FRY to be suspended when the peace conference began, and permanently lifted when an agreement was signed, but the other Contact Group members rejected this proposal.<sup>156</sup> Russia believed that the FRY's co-operative approach should be rewarded by its normal re-integration into the international community: sanctions should be lifted and the FRY should be accepted into the OSCE.<sup>157</sup> However, Yeltsin continued to refuse to lift sanctions unilaterally and again vetoed the Duma resolution demanding this, on the grounds that a unilateral action would violate Russia's commitments under the UN Charter and would be at variance with the Russian constitution.<sup>158</sup> The Russian attitude on sanctions was summed up by Karasin on 23 November:

Yesterday, the Security Council adopted a most important, although belated, decision, lifting the burden of economic sanctions from Yugoslavia. The resolution, coming into force immediately, has opened a wide potential for the re-establishment and development of all-round Russian-Yugoslav co-operation.

It is important that this was done not by unilateral actions, but on the basis of a joint Contact Group project accepted unanimously by the Security Council. A new

<sup>153</sup> United Nations Security Council (22 November 1995), pp. 11-13.

<sup>154</sup> Russian Federation MFA (14 November 1995).

<sup>155</sup> Pel'ts (30 November 1995).

<sup>156</sup> *Russian Public TV* (30 October 1995).

<sup>157</sup> Russian Federation MFA (18 December 1995).

<sup>158</sup> *Segodnia* (10 November 1995).



page has opened in the peace process in the Balkans when, after Dayton, Belgrade is considered by all sides not as a 'source of evil' but as a reliable partner in efforts towards a settlement. The wall of international isolation surrounding the FRY is beginning to fall.<sup>159</sup>

Russian-Yugoslav co-operation was spurred by the signing of further economic and trade agreements and the adjusting of the texts of the August 1994 and February 1995 agreements on trade and the supply of natural gas. On 23 November, the MFER announced that it was ready to implement these agreements now that sanctions had been suspended.<sup>160</sup> Russian politicians believed that Russia should use its connections in order to get a foot in the Yugoslav market as quickly as possible since Russia faced tough international competition. As Kozyrev remarked, '[n]ow is absolutely the right moment to get all our fraternal feelings realised in economic interests, and not to be late in doing so, either'.<sup>161</sup>

Although the Russian government accepted the suspension of sanctions on the FRY by UNSCR 1022, it would have preferred sanctions on Belgrade and Republika Srpska to be lifted completely.<sup>162</sup> Yet, Kozyrev did not consider there to be any essential problem. He explained that sanctions

may be re-imposed only if there is another radical turn towards war, some flare-up of the war, or if Belgrade itself ... embarks upon the path of war. This is virtually unthinkable, though.<sup>163</sup>

Unfortunately, this optimism was to prove unfounded. Indeed, the confidence that Russian policy makers placed in the FRY government was, given its past record, unfounded, and the rush to establish the FRY as Russia's Balkan ally was misguided and premature. While the status of Kosovo remained unresolved, Russia's approach was likely to create major tensions with the Western states in the future.

The second area of dispute remained the arms embargo. Not unreasonably, Russia opposed lifting the embargo as this would lead to re-armament that could destabilise the region and create future conflict. As Lavrov told the Security Council in the debate on what became UNSCR 1021,

neither the spirit nor the letter of the text follow the logic of the political process, which is aimed at ending military confrontation in the region... We believe that the

<sup>159</sup> Russian Federation MFA (23 November 1995).

<sup>160</sup> *Tanjug* (15 November 1995); *ITAR-TASS* (23 November 1995).

<sup>161</sup> *NTV* (23 November 1995).

<sup>162</sup> Russian Federation MFA (19 December 1995).

<sup>163</sup> *NTV* (23 November 1995).



Balkans should never again pose a threat to international security and stability. Therefore, we are in favour not of an arms build-up in the region, but of a restriction and reduction of arms.<sup>164</sup>

However, the other Contact Group members, especially the United States, wanted to lift the embargo – believing that this was necessary to create a balance of forces – and this was agreed by the three Balkan presidents at Dayton. Consequently, Russia worked to remove what they perceived as discrimination against the Bosnian Serbs and a lack of international control over the supply of arms in the initial approach. Russian diplomats insisted on an equal approach to all sides in the resolution, the gradual lifting of the embargo, and control by the UNSC sanctions committee of the supply of arms.<sup>165</sup> These amendments, and the fact that it was ‘an integral part of the Agreement package approved in Dayton’ by the three presidents, led Russia, ‘although unable to associate itself with’ the draft resolution, to abstain rather than to use its veto in the voting.<sup>166</sup> Kozyrev also explained that Milošević had telephoned him and asked Russia not to hinder the adoption of the resolution, partly because Yugoslavia also needed weapons, and also because acceptance of the resolution was part of the compromise which included the resolution on lifting sanctions.<sup>167</sup>

### **The military aspects**

The most problematic area was the military implementation of the agreement. Western states had for some time been discussing the possibility of NATO implementing any peace agreement, no doubt partly in order to establish a new peace-keeping role for NATO, but also for financial reasons and because of Western dissatisfaction with the existing arrangements. After the problems experienced by UNPROFOR, NATO wanted the implementation force to have a single chain of command and for there to be no dual-key arrangement, so that United Nations diplomats would not be able to veto the use of force. This was also because American troops would now be participating on the ground, and the US refused to allow its troops to serve under foreign command.<sup>168</sup>

Russia accepted that NATO would have a significant role in the implementation force, but insisted on four principles. Firstly, the force must receive a mandate from the UNSC in a resolution that would authorise the participating states – and not merely

<sup>164</sup> United Nations Security Council (22 November 1995).

<sup>165</sup> Russian Federation MFA (23 November 1995).

<sup>166</sup> United Nations Security Council (22 November 1995).

<sup>167</sup> *NTV* (23 November 1995).

<sup>168</sup> Comments by Holbrooke, *ITAR-TASS* (17 October 1995). The Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), always an American, would be the overall commander of a NATO operation.



NATO – to constitute the force. The UNSC would also preserve its ultimate control over the force. Secondly, the force must be requested by the parties themselves and must not be a ‘coercive operation’.<sup>169</sup> These principles were intended to ensure that it was a peace *implementation* rather than a peace *making* force, that it did not involve coercion, and was therefore not in effect a NATO ‘occupation’. Thirdly, Russian troops must not serve under NATO military command.<sup>170</sup> Fourthly, all the countries providing troops should have equal participation in the planning and management of the operation; this would ensure that Russian troops were not serving under NAC political control.<sup>171</sup>

The first two demands were relatively uncontroversial. By signing the Dayton accords in Paris, the sides accepted Annex 1a. They agreed thereby to facilitate the operations of an Implementation Force (IFOR), which might be established by NATO and would ‘operate under the authority and subject to the direction and political control of the North Atlantic Council through the NATO chain of command’, with the assistance of other, non-NATO states.<sup>172</sup> In addition, IFOR received its mandate from the UNSC in Resolution 1031 of 15 December 1995, which stated that the Security Council:

13. Notes the invitation of the parties to the international community to send to the region for a period of approximately one year a multinational implementation force to assist in implementation of the territorial and other militarily related provisions of Annex 1-A of the Peace Agreement;

14. Authorises the Member States acting through or in co-operation with the organisation referred to in Annex 1-A of the Peace Agreement to establish a multinational implementation force (IFOR) under unified command and control in order to fulfil the role specified in Annex 1-A and Annex 2 of the Peace Agreement.

The resolution thus (rather circuitously) avoided naming NATO, specified that the parties had agreed to the formation of the force, and gave the UNSC the responsibility to renew the force’s mandate after one year, hence ensuring ‘reliable political control’ of the operation by the Security Council.<sup>173</sup> Russian demands had therefore been met.

The terms of Russian participation in the force were more difficult to resolve. NATO was keen for Russian troops to be involved as this would prevent Russia feeling

<sup>169</sup> Comments by Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Afanasevskii, *Interfax* (18 October 1995).

<sup>170</sup> Comments by Colonel-General Shevtsov, *ITAR-TASS* (20 October 1995).

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>172</sup> ‘Annex 1A: Agreement on the Military Aspects of the Peace Settlement’, *Dayton, The General Framework Agreement* (1995), Article 1: General Obligations.

<sup>173</sup> Speech by Lavrov, United Nations Security Council (15 December 1995), pp. 24-26.



that it had been pushed out, and would lay the basis for future co-operation in other spheres. But NATO planners did not want Russia to have a significant role. Nor did they want to allow the Russian troops independence from NATO control. And they did not want to allow Russia to have an equal say in the planning and command of the operation. Instead, they wanted NATO to control the operation and Russian troops to be subject to NATO control. This was partly a question of prestige and power; but it was also a practical issue, since American policy makers in particular perceived the Russians as being pro-Serb and also opposed to the use of effective force by NATO; an independent Russian role and significant Russian involvement in control of the operation might undermine implementation of the agreement. Initially, the Pentagon wanted Russia to perform only auxiliary tasks, rather than participating in separating the sides and taking up positions within sectors, but it was forced to back down.<sup>174</sup>

Russian military and political representatives proposed various models for the operation and for Russia's participation in it. Politically, they wanted the force to be controlled by a Special International Council which would answer to the UNSC, would be made up of representatives of the contributing countries, and would operate on the basis of consensus.<sup>175</sup> This was unacceptable to NATO, since it would give Russia too much say and the possibility of a veto.<sup>176</sup> Militarily, Russia wanted a joint NATO-Russian operation, which would highlight Russia's role and distinguish it from the other, smaller states that would participate alongside NATO. This could operate on the basis of a joint command, or a rotating command, or there could be separate zones with separate commanders.<sup>177</sup> None of these options was acceptable to NATO because they would violate the principles of a single chain of command and American command of US troops.<sup>178</sup> Furthermore, there would be too few Russian troops – at most, 3,000 – to justify such arrangements. Grachev himself admitted that, given Russia's financial limitations and military commitments elsewhere, it could not expect to play a similar role as the United States which would provide 25,000 troops.<sup>179</sup> This meant that, to a certain extent, the United States and NATO were able to define the terms, but both sides had to compromise, although NATO's concessions were perhaps more cosmetic and

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<sup>174</sup> Bulavinov (31 October 1995).

<sup>175</sup> Shevtsov (20 October 1995).

<sup>176</sup> Pogorelyi (10 November 1995).

<sup>177</sup> Comments by Kozyrev, *ITAR-TASS* (16 October 1995); comments by Yeltsin, *ITAR-TASS/Interfax* (22 October 1995).

<sup>178</sup> Comments by Holbrooke, *Interfax* (17 October 1995). Shevtsov himself recognised the advantages of having a single commander, but rejected a NATO monopoly of that post; *ITAR-TASS* (20 October 1995).

<sup>179</sup> *Russian Public TV* (12 November 1995).



designed to demonstrate acknowledgement of Russia's status rather than the substance of its demands.

Negotiations began as soon as the cease-fire commenced in Bosnia, and were conducted by Colonel-General Leontii Shevtsov at NATO's military headquarters (SHAPE), by Grachev and his American counter-part, Secretary of Defence William Perry, and, on the political side, by Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Afanasevskii and Vitalii Churkin (who had been appointed Ambassador to Brussels and Liaison Officer with NATO the previous summer). A compromise was achieved for the political structure that respected to a certain degree one of Russia's basic demands: Russian participation in the planning and control of the operation. A joint council of the NAC plus Russia – the '16+1' formula – was created, in which Russia would have an equal say on the consensus model, with Churkin serving as the Russian ambassador to NATO.<sup>180</sup> However, this only related to decisions affecting the Russian contingent; Russia did not have representation on the NAC for decisions relating to the operation as a whole. This meant that IFOR was, contrary to Russian aims, a NATO-led operation.

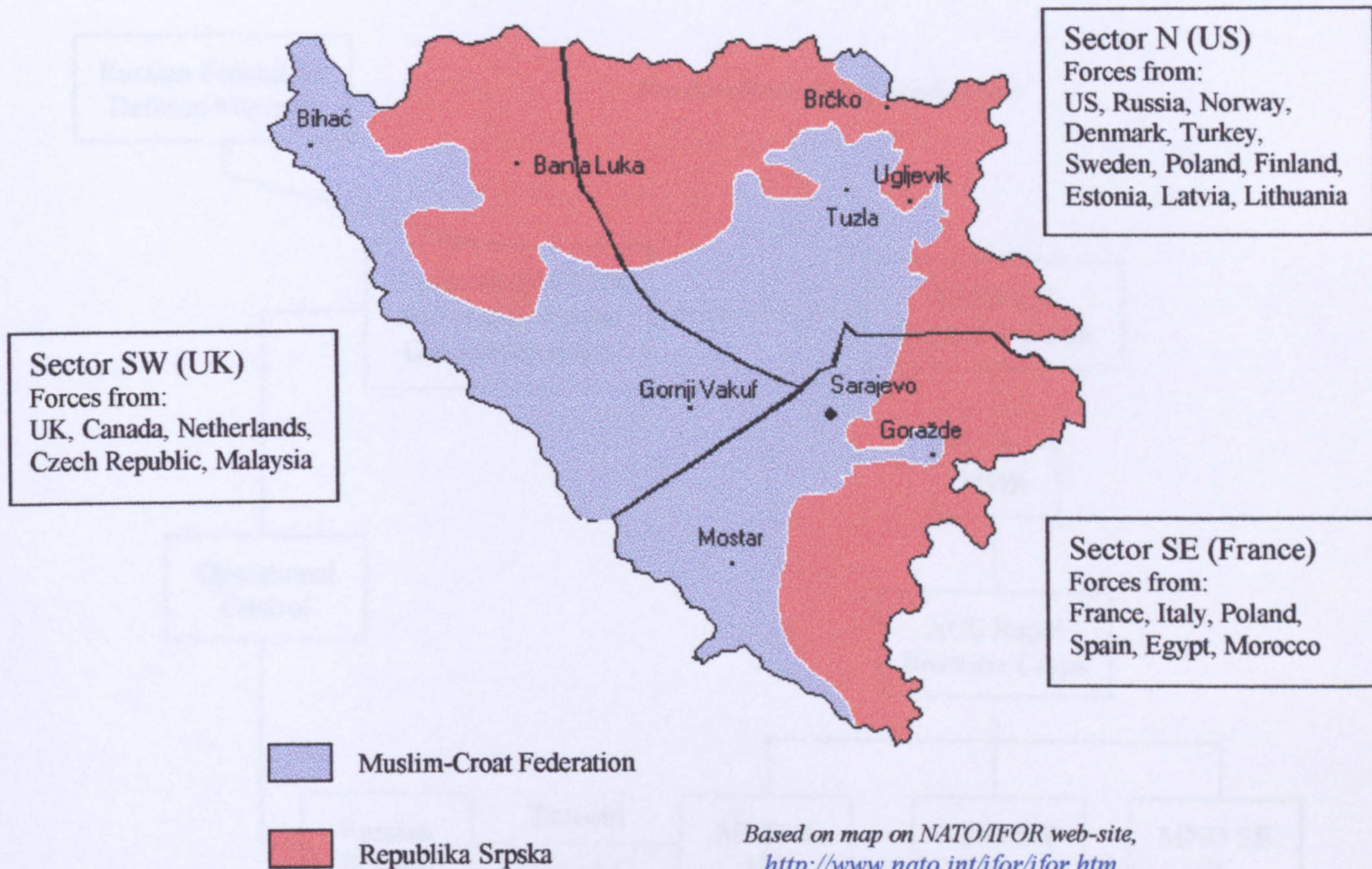
Militarily, an imaginative, although somewhat contrived, solution was found to the problem of maintaining a single command structure while Russian troops did not serve under NATO command. NATO had divided Bosnia-Herzegovina into three divisions of responsibility: Multinational Division North – MND (N) – was the American sector, MND (SE) was the French sector, and MND (SW) was the British sector (map 11).

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<sup>180</sup> Pel'ts (30 November 1995).



Map 11 IFOR sectors



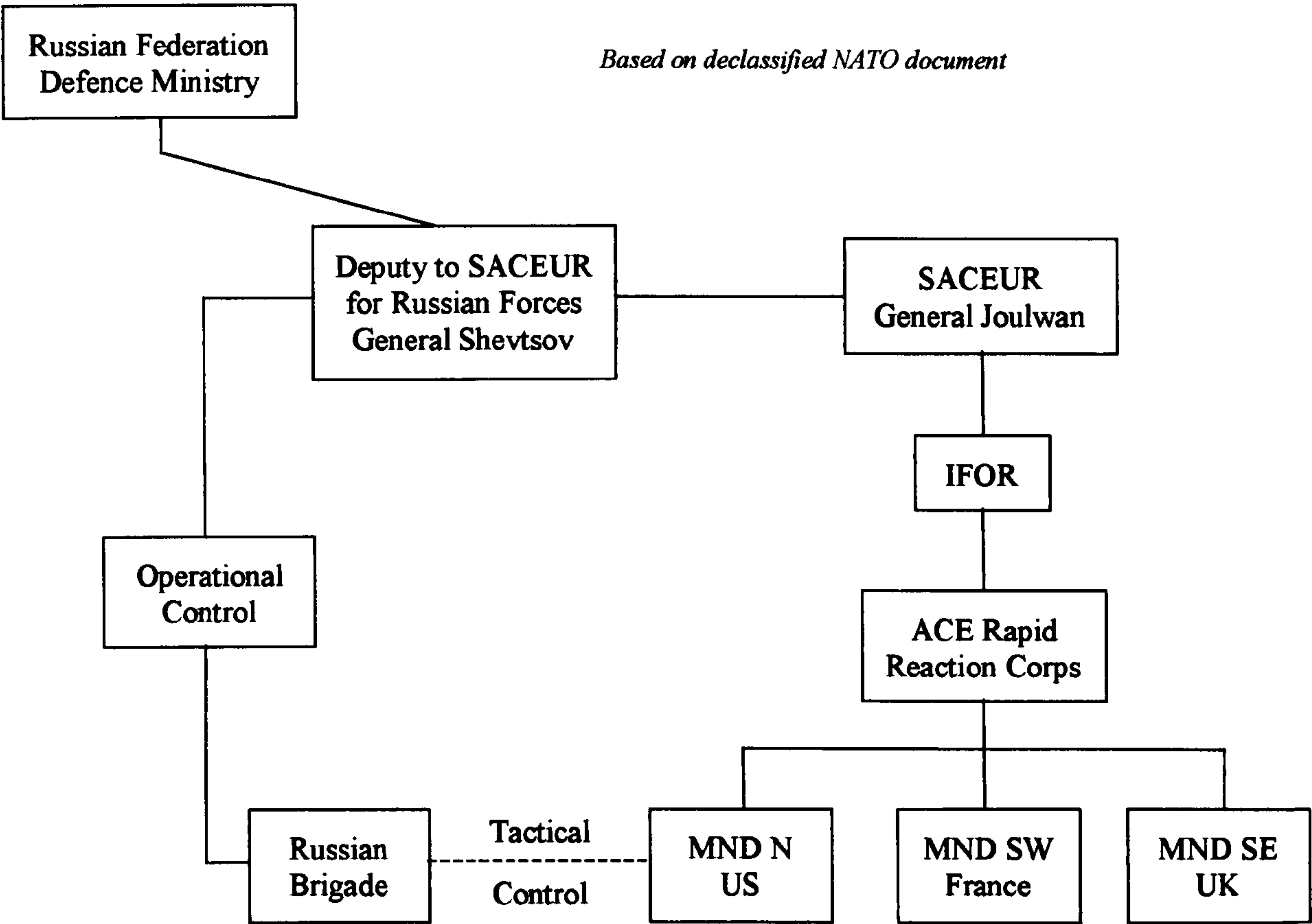
The Russian battalion of 1,600 troops would be deployed in the American sector, MND (N). Col-Gen Shevtsov was appointed deputy to General Joulwan in his capacity as a United States general rather than in his capacity as SACEUR, in order that – nominally at least – the Russian contingent would not be subordinate to NATO. Grachev explained that this meant that all orders given to the Russian brigade would carry the signatures of both Shevtsov and Joulwan, and that if Shevtsov disagreed with an order, he could suspend it or clarify it with Grachev directly.<sup>181</sup> Ultimately, however, Shevtsov would not be able to veto a decision by General Joulwan, but the latter agreed to consult the Russian general on all matters relating to the Russian brigade, and all orders would be conveyed through Shevtsov (figure 1).<sup>182</sup> Perhaps most importantly for the success of these arrangements, there was to be liaison at all levels of the operation: at SHAPE, where a Russian military mission was opened on 11 November; at the intermediate level, the Combined Air Operations Centre (CAOC) at Vicenza; and at MND (N) headquarters in Tuzla.

<sup>181</sup> *Russian Public TV* (12 November 1995).

<sup>182</sup> Nadein (11 November 1995).



**Figure 1 Russian participation in IFOR**



Certain efforts were made to demonstrate that the Russian contribution was not merely symbolic. The Russian brigade was based in the Posavina corridor, which Grachev described as the ‘main and most important region’.<sup>183</sup> And, although it was not in the most controversial part of that region, Brčko, it was in the Sapna thumb, an area that had experienced some of the fiercest fighting during the war and had changed hands several times. Although the headquarters were in Uglevik, in Republika Srpska, a battalion was also based on the Federation side of the Inter-Entity Boundary Line, in order to demonstrate impartiality. Russian troops subsequently helped to establish a 75 km length of the zone of separation and patrolled both sides of it. During the second stage, an additional 1,000 Russian troops would patrol the Brčko region in joint patrols with American troops.

<sup>183</sup> *Russian Public TV* (12 November 1995).



## Domestic criticism of Russian participation in IFOR

Many Russian critics attacked the arrangements and, indeed, the very fact of Russian participation in a NATO-led peace implementation force. From a liberal perspective, Vladimir Nadein interpreted Russia's position in the negotiations as 'inflexible', and questioned whether such 'obviously tangled logic' of the command arrangements was really necessary when the national interests of Russia and the US so closely coincided in the matter of stopping the Bosnian carnage.<sup>184</sup> Certainly, the idea of Joulwan being considered an American general rather than the NATO commander in his dealings with Shevtsov was sophistic; it also revealed a curious attitude on the part of Russian diplomats, since they allowed Russian troops to serve under a United States, but not a NATO, commander. For many Russian commentators, these were humiliating terms that would not have been accepted by other major states. As Kondrashov wrote when the negotiations were continuing, 'the Americans reject a "dual-key" principle because they are unwilling to accept a situation in which their soldiers' lives depend on someone else's will. What makes our soldiers deserving of less?'<sup>185</sup>

Like many other realist critics, Kondrashov viewed the operation as an attempt by NATO to enforce peace, and he questioned why Russia should participate at all:

If Russia were to refuse to 'submit to America', and hence to participate in this NATO – not UN – operation of 'coerced peace', it would, in effect, be leaving the Balkan stage. That would strike a blow against the concept of partnership with the West, which is basic for Russian diplomacy.

But does partnership really mean some kind of automatic reaction and the acceptance of any terms, including unequal ones?<sup>186</sup>

A similar point was made by Aleksandr Pikaev in *Moskovskie novosti*, who asked whether the Brussels agreements were 'a continuation of the compromised policy of 1992-1993':

It seems that this time, too, Moscow said "yes" on all the problems that NATO considers important...

The intricate system of political and military control over the operation that has been devised leaves Russia with only the right to a voice, to be consulted ... the real decision making monopoly remains in Brussels.

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<sup>184</sup> Nadein (11 November 1995).

<sup>185</sup> Kondrashov (21 October 1995).

<sup>186</sup> Kondrashov (21 November 1995).



And just what did Russia get? The opportunity to show its flag once again and to confirm its status as an influential power? But influential powers do not put their soldiers under the command of military alliances of which they are not members.<sup>187</sup>

Both Pikaev and Kondrashov implied, from a realist perspective, that if Russia could not have a more equal or independent role, then it should not be involved. Other commentators made a more practical argument for why Russia should not participate: it could not afford such participation, especially as it had more vital matters for its troops to deal with nearer to home. This was expressed starkly by Vladimir Frolov in *Nezavisimaia gazeta*:

We are told that participation in world politics is not cheap, especially when one is talking about a 'normal great power' like Russia. The paramount duty of any government in any state is to take care, first of all, of its own citizens and only then, if manpower and resources remain, foreign citizens in need of assistance. And it is absolutely criminal to send our soldiers to a foreign country for peace-keeping ... at a time when our own home is ablaze with a war that is very similar to the Bosnian one, and from where body bags are dispatched punctually every day from Chechnya.<sup>188</sup>

The debate about Russia's foreign policy and its role in world and Balkan affairs was clearly as alive now as it had been three years previously. As these commentators recognised, the government had been faced with a choice between participating in a NATO-led force on NATO's terms, or abandoning its 'presence' in the Balkans. Why, then, contrary to the criticisms, had it chosen the former? The reasons relate directly to the orientation of official Russian policy throughout the Balkans conflicts.

Firstly, policy makers felt that they could not afford for Russia to 'abandon' its position in the Balkans, a region in which they claimed that Russia continued to have strong interests. Russia had to remain involved, even if this was not on the terms that they wanted. Secondly, they had always viewed involvement in conflict resolution as part of Russia's role as a great power on the global stage, and as part of Russia's role as a major European power. The implementation of the Dayton agreement was going to be a key period in the international community's involvement in the Yugoslav conflicts, and would have a significant impact on the evolving European security structure. Russian policy makers wanted Russia to be part of this operation and to have a say in it. Thirdly, as we have seen, the issue was closely linked to the broader issue of Russia's

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<sup>187</sup> Pikaev (3-10 December 1995).

<sup>188</sup> Frolov (28 November 1995).



relations with NATO. If Russia did not participate, then NATO would have pushed Russia out of the Balkans at the same time that it was proposing to push Russia out of Central and Eastern Europe by accepting new members. The convoluted military arrangements, and the political arrangements, were designed to allow Russia to participate while preserving its status in relation to NATO. Grachev, for instance, claimed that all the Russian requests 'were met positively ... our forces will participate in this operation, but they will not be under NATO'.<sup>189</sup> Preventing a NATO monopoly would also allow some balance, since NATO was perceived as being anti-Serb.

But most important was the argument that Kondrashov and Pikaev attacked: the administration's insistence on maintaining co-operative relations with the West. We have seen that Yeltsin re-established the idea of partnership at his summit meeting with Clinton at Hyde Park in late October. In December, Kozyrev stated that co-operation between Russia and NATO, and between Russia and the United States, was gathering strength; the US and Russia had both made a contribution to achieving the Bosnia peace accords and would be 'continuing to co-operate in the spirit of partnership'.<sup>190</sup> The point was that Russian participation in IFOR would demonstrate the positive aspects of this co-operation if it did indeed establish peace in Bosnia. As one NATO analyst recognised, the Yeltsin administration had receded from the 'over-zealous' pro-Western policy of 1992, but still advocated a

cautious but pragmatic approach to continued co-operation with the West, including NATO. Without a concrete example of how co-operation with NATO can also serve Russian interests, the chances for this best-case scenario are extremely slim – hence Yeltsin's current gamble with IFOR co-operation.<sup>191</sup>

Ultimately, Yeltsin had invested too much political capital in co-operation with the West to abandon that policy now that an opportunity had arrived to demonstrate the benefits.

## Conclusion

In summer 1995, the Western states, led by America, finally felt compelled to coerce the Bosnian Serbs to accept a settlement, one that was not significantly different from the Contact Group plan that had been presented to the parties over a year before. This

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<sup>189</sup> Nadein (11 November 1995).

<sup>190</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (6 December 1995).

<sup>191</sup> Petzold (1995).



was achieved only by ignoring Russian objections and by making decisions without significant Russian participation.

Russian policy makers objected to Operation 'Deliberate Force' because it was launched by NATO and UN military commanders without consulting Russia, and also because they opposed the use of force to coerce the sides to accept a peace deal. During the NATO air campaign, Russian attacks on the Western policy approached the level of rhetoric associated with the Cold War. There was opposition to the air strikes across the political spectrum. Yet, despite pressure from the domestic political forces of the opposition, the administration refused to provide the Bosnian Serbs with military support or to break off relations with the West, either in the Contact Group or more generally. The MFA and, ultimately, Yeltsin himself still believed that it was in Russia's interests to maintain co-operative relations with the West, and those relations should not be sacrificed for the sake of the Bosnian Serbs. Consequently, when the combination of the air campaign, the Federation offensive, and American-led diplomacy achieved the re-establishment of the Sarajevo exclusion zone and then a cease-fire, Russia co-operated with the other Contact Group countries and contributed to the achievement of a peace settlement. The *rapprochement* between Russia and NATO was confirmed by the agreement to participate in the NATO-led peace-keeping force, IFOR.

The events of summer 1995 had shown the inadequacy of Russia's policy towards the conflicts. Only by ignoring the Russian position could peace be achieved. In the conclusion, I shall discuss the lessons to be learned from these events and analyse the implications of the evolution of Russian policy towards the conflicts.



## Conclusion

In part II, I analysed the evolution of Russian policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts from the initial liberal Westernising approach of the independent Russian Federation to a consensual approach based on neo-realist great power concepts. In part III, I showed how this new assertiveness led to a crisis in relations with the West which was resolved through the formation of a great power concert. The concert served to reduce tensions arising between the powers over the conflicts, but was ineffective in resolving the conflicts. An end to the Bosnian war was achieved only by rejecting Russia's demands and by ignoring its great power status.

In the conclusion, I shall evaluate the various approaches of Russian policy and Russia's contribution to the international mediation efforts, in terms of Russian interests and the interests of peace and justice in former Yugoslavia. I will also look at the wider implications for the evolving security system, and make some remarks on what the future would hold.

### Liberal internationalist policy of 1992

During most of 1992, Russian policy was close to that of the West. Contrary to some claims, Russia was involved in the mediation process, particularly through the United Nations Security Council where Russia sponsored or supported all of the resolutions passed in connection with the Yugoslav conflicts. Russian diplomats believed that it was Russia's duty as a great power to contribute to efforts to end the conflicts and achieve a just peace. Unfortunately, their faith in the West as the guardian of human rights meant that they were insufficiently critical of the Western policy in some areas, particularly the recognition process and also Croatian involvement in the Bosnian conflict. This was partly because they did not want Russia to be isolated and wanted to prove that Russia was a 'reliable partner'; in other words, they 'looked up to' the West in a manner that many Russians found humiliating. There is also some truth in the assertion that this was done in order not to jeopardise economic support for Russia.

Nevertheless, key Russian policy makers genuinely shared the dominant Western interpretation of the Yugoslav conflicts, especially of the Bosnian war. They believed that the Bosnian Serbs were the main perpetrators of 'ethnic cleansing' and were aiming to create an 'ethnically pure' mini state through forceful acquisition of territory and the eviction or killing of members of other ethnic groups in those regions. And they concurred with the Western view that the Bosnian Serbs were supported by the Serbian



and Montenegrin authorities who wanted to create a 'Greater Serbia'. Kozyrev in particular was aware of the political orientation of those in power in Belgrade, Pale, and Knin, whose programme was equivalent to that of the 'red-brown' forces opposed to the government of the newly independent Russian Federation.

Russian centrist and nationalist critics, in contrast, accused the West of being 'anti-Serb'. This was partly because they claimed that all of the sides in the conflict were morally equivalent, that they all aimed to create 'ethnically pure' states. But this was not true, at least in 1992. As Pavel Kandel' writes: 'Although none of the parties is guiltless when it comes to ethnic persecution, only the Serbs have elevated national homogeneity to a principle of state policy.'<sup>1</sup> In fact, a large proportion of the population in Bosnia – including many Serbs – objected to this principle. Many considered it part of being Bosnian, part of their identity, to live in a multi-confessional or multi-ethnic society.<sup>2</sup> These feelings were destroyed by ethnic nationalists who deliberately fostered hatred and fear to erase the memories of inter-ethnic cohabitation.<sup>3</sup>

### **Views of the Russian opposition**

The attitude of many critics of Russian and Western policy in 1992 reflected three inter-related viewpoints. Firstly, there was a sympathy with the ethnic nationalist programme, particularly of the Serbs, as Russian nationalists favoured a similar programme in the former Soviet Union.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, there was an underlying pro-Serb and anti-Muslim and anti-Catholic orientation. This was evident among deputies of the Supreme Soviet and among many academics. Even if Serbs were guilty of the majority of crimes in the conflict, many Russians believed that they should be supported by Russia anyway, for historical, ethnic, and religious reasons.<sup>5</sup> Thirdly, there was a reductive realism: not only were all the sides in the conflicts aiming for equivalent goals, but all the outside powers were supporting a particular side in order to further their own interests. Russia should do the same by supporting the Serbs.

Even those 'reformers' who were supposedly the 'democrats' in Moscow displayed many of these traits. For Vladimir Lukin, democratisation appears primarily to be a means to restore Russia's great power status:

if we don't show that we are continuing on the path of democratic development, I think the result will be an acceleration of the process of expanding NATO... And

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<sup>1</sup> Kandel' (2-9 July 1995).

<sup>2</sup> See Bringa (1993) and Fine and Donia (1994).

<sup>3</sup> Sorabji (1995).

<sup>4</sup> For an example as late as 1997, see Volobuev and Tiagunenko (1997).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Gus'kova (1995a), p. 38.



this will be followed by an attempt to eject us from regions in which we still have some influence. From Yugoslavia, for example, by encouraging and strengthening the Muslim state.<sup>6</sup>

Kozyrev was well aware that the state centrists were more radical than their comments intended for Western ears would suggest. This is why he chose the unorthodox tactic of the mock speech in Stockholm. Nevertheless, by 1994, Kozyrev himself had moved towards the kind of policies that he had lampooned at the CSCE summit. This was recognised by Lukin, who gave an analysis of divergent views of the conflicts without leaving in much doubt his own opinion:

The international aspect of the Balkan crisis stems from a fundamental difference in viewpoints on the events that are occurring. There are two opposite points of view.

The first one holds that international intervention is taking place in Bosnia. External forces, supported by 'internal villains', are infringing the sovereignty of the Bosnian republic. As a subject of international law and a member of the UN, the central Bosnian government of Izetbegović should be supported morally, legally and, most importantly, physically. The Serbs' military efforts within Bosnian should be repelled as a component part of the external attack on the state of Bosnia.

The second viewpoint holds that from the outset Bosnia has been an inherently and organically unviable state created by Tito's communist mafia according to Lenin's disastrous formula, and that it is being used to promote very specific interests by such diverse forces as the united Germany, the Vatican and a number of Muslim 'centres of power'. A civil war that is brutal on all sides is being waged on this territory, and the real task of the international community is to find optimal terms that satisfy the three sides participating in the conflict and living in Bosnia: the Muslims, the Serbs and the Croats...

The first viewpoint is held by the American Congress and, until recently, the US government, possibly against its own will, and by influential circles in Germany...

The second viewpoint is held by Russian diplomacy, which has nearly come to its senses, as well as by France and Britain, which are returning to realism.<sup>7</sup>

The second view, which Lukin supports, became the dominant view in Russian policy as he states. Policy after 1992 was based on the supposedly 'balanced' position

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<sup>6</sup> Karpov (14 March 1995).

<sup>7</sup> Lukin (9 December 1994).



that all sides were equally to blame, and the (contradictory) notion that Russia had to protect its own interests in the Balkans as other powers were doing.

## Great power policy after 1992

In chapter 3, I failed to find any convincing arguments that Russia has important interests in the Balkans. This was recognised by some Russian commentators.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the view that the Balkan peninsula was a region of significant Russian interests became commonplace not just among neo-realist commentators and politicians, but also within the government.

In relation to the Yugoslav conflicts themselves, Russia in fact had fewer direct interests than Western European states. Even if the war spread, it would not reach the borders of the Russian Federation. Few refugees reached the Russian Federation (although Russia offered to take refugees from Serb Krajina in August 1995). Despite efforts of the MFER to convince the government otherwise, even the direct economic consequences were minimal.

Nevertheless, after 1992, the government believed that it had interests distinct from the West in relation to the conflicts. This was partly because of the change in policy thinking. As I argued in chapter 2, the rejection of liberal Westernism spelt the end of the notion that Russia necessarily shared interests with the West because of its liberal democratic system. Certainly this idea had been simplistic and many of the arguments were untenable. Furthermore, Russia's geographical position meant that it had different *priorities* to the West; it was right that Russia should focus more on the 'near abroad', for example. In these areas, Russian *interests* might conflict with those of the West, particularly in the issues associated with the oil and gas resources in the Caspian. But none of this means that Russia necessarily had different interests from the West in relation to the Yugoslav conflicts. Unfortunately, the shift from liberal internationalism led to the invention of interests where they did not exist, in order to distinguish Russian great power interests and to appease domestic opposition. Ironically, this meant that policy was still a function of relations with the West instead of being derived from an analysis of the conflicts themselves.

The government was influenced also by the argument that Western powers were pursuing their own interests (in a neo-realist sense) in their policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts. This was partly a consequence of the way that the EC handled the recognition issue. Russia portrayed the Western powers (especially the United States and Germany)

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<sup>8</sup> For example, Fel'gengauer (12 August 1995).



as biased and anti-Serb, while Russia was unbiased and had an independent policy. Kozyrev, for example, argued that European governments were ‘completely submitting themselves to the mood of society, and therefore are taking a one-sided, anti-Serb position’. Russia, on the other hand, was ‘taking a balanced position’.<sup>9</sup>

### **A balanced policy**

I have already quoted Lavrov in chapter 5: ‘it is impossible in this conflict to determine who is right and who is wrong’. This mantra was repeated regularly by Russian policy makers after 1992. For example, Kozyrev was satisfied with the fact that President Clinton described the conflict as a civil war because, he said, ‘[i]t is common knowledge that in a civil war nobody is right and nobody is wrong’.<sup>10</sup> And Yeltsin used this claim to argue that the indictments of Karadžić and Mladić by the International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia could ‘hardly be called just’: ‘In a civil war (I am using the definition of the Bosnian crisis made by the US President B. Clinton) no one can be right and no one can be guilty.’<sup>11</sup>

But, regardless of whether this was a civil war or whether it was a case of external aggression, the Russian argument is incoherent. A ‘civil war’ is a war between two or more sides within the boundaries of a state, but there is nothing special about this fact that makes moral evaluation invalid. Russian diplomats wanted to make a distinction between such a war and an act of aggression by one state against another because, in the latter case, the United Nations would have been compelled to act. But aggression by one ethnic group against another is not only morally wrong, it is also illegal as a result of developments in humanitarian international law after the actions of the Nazi German government in the Second World War.

I have argued that there was no moral equivalence in 1992, and that Russian policy makers also believed this. In 1992, they endorsed the London principles which upheld the idea of maintaining a multi-ethnic Bosnia and demanded Serb withdrawal from the territory that they had seized. The Serbs did not withdraw and the ‘ethnic cleansing’ continued. It would seem that responsibility was clear. The Vance-Owen plan was then presented to the sides; whatever its weakness, the plan maintained a multi-ethnic, unitary Bosnia, and it was endorsed by the Russian administration as the basis for a just peace. The Bosnian Serbs again rejected it.

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<sup>9</sup> Mlechin (26 November 1994); see also Kozyrev (1995b), p. 129.

<sup>10</sup> *Interfax* (3 November 1994).

<sup>11</sup> *Rossiiskie vesti* (10 August 1995).



But the 'international community' – including Russia – was not prepared to enforce the London principles or the VOPP. Not surprisingly, the trauma of 1992 and the failure to gain outside intervention hardened the attitudes of the Bosnian government side and made it more nationalist. The government played on the Islamic factor in order to gain support from Muslim governments. After the VOPP was abandoned, all sides in the conflict as well as the 'international community' accepted that a *de facto* division would take place. Each side now wanted to gain a maximum amount of territory in a partitioned Bosnia-Herzegovina. By default, then, all sides were now in a sense equivalent in terms of their aims.

This suggests that the shift to the dogma of 'equal responsibility' by Russian diplomats can be explained in part by developments in the conflict itself, although it should be emphasised that those developments resulted from the lack of will on the part of all the major powers, including Russia, to enforce a just settlement.

Nevertheless, even after the VOPP was abandoned, the sides were not equivalent in terms of the Russians' own principles.

### **After the VOPP**

If Bosnia was to be divided, there were two options for international mediators. The first was to accept the balance of forces and conclude a peace based on a Serb victory or a carve-up between the Serbs and Croats. The second option was to devise a 'just' division of the territory (whatever that could be).

The first option was espoused by many centrist Russian politicians. It resulted from an amoral realist view that often masked pro-Serb sympathies. For example, Ambartsumov claimed in April 1993 that there was 'a greater possibility for a peaceful settlement than some time ago' because all the sides 'especially the Croats and Muslims' were 'tired of war': 'They are prepared, first and foremost, the Croats, for direct talks with the Serbs' (in other words, they were prepared to do a deal on a carve up). And he added magnanimously: 'I think that Serbia ... having won the military victory, could make some territorial concessions.'<sup>12</sup> Similarly, Lukin wrote in December 1994 that Russian diplomats could propose terms for peace that had become realistic for Bosnia after the Serb victories around Bihać:

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<sup>12</sup> *Ostankino TV* (26 April 1993b).



Two main terms suggest themselves: that the Serbs receive no less than half of the country – they now control 73% and have the wind of victory blowing in their sails – and that this territory constitutes an integral whole, not unconnected fragments.<sup>13</sup>

Presented as a neutral approach, this was an application of the principle ‘might is right’. Not only was it morally dubious, but it was untenable once the ‘international community’ had become involved. The ‘international community’ intervened from the very beginning, and contributed to the outcome of the conflict. Its first action – in September 1991 – had been to impose an arms embargo that froze an imbalance of force between the republican governments and the Serbs. When Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognised as an independent state, the JNA gave its heavy weapons to the Bosnian Serbs (or Bosnian Serb members of the JNA retained them). Because of the embargo, the Bosnian government was denied the right to self-defence against aggression (which the UNSC acknowledged was occurring when it imposed sanctions on the FRY) enshrined in the United Nations Charter (Article 51).

In any case, a settlement based on a Serb victory was unacceptable because of the wider implications, since it would set a perverse precedent. This was Kozyrev’s own view. Speaking in September 1993, he noted the need to resolve issues connected with the map then being discussed, pointing out that it was important that ‘the impression that this map consolidates the war gains and the results of ethnic cleansing, no matter who carried them out, should not be created’; for Russia, it was ‘particularly important to prevent such a precedent being set as it might lead to Russian-speakers being subjected to ethnic cleansing’ in the former Soviet Union.<sup>14</sup>

Despite these problems, the first plan after the VOPP – the EU plan – was based precisely on the principle ‘might is right’. It was, in effect, a deal between the Croats and the Serbs. Not surprisingly, it was rejected by the Bosnian government.

The great powers then turned to the second option: to devise what they saw as a just or fair division of the territory: approximately 17.5 per cent for the Croats, 33.5 per cent for the Muslims, and 49 per cent for the Serbs. This was the basis of the Contact Group plan (by then the Muslim-Croat Federation had then been formed and so the ratio was 51:49).

The division was generous to the Serb side. Kozyrev put it thus:

Russia believes that, when the territorial issue is decided, the Serb people of Bosnia-Herzegovina should get 49 per cent of the territory. History has decreed

<sup>13</sup> Lukin (9 December 1994).

<sup>14</sup> *Interfax* (7 September 1993).



that, although the Serbs form only around 33 per cent of the Bosnian population, they are entitled to claim a large and fair slice of territory.

And he issued a 'clear warning':

There is another option, leading to war – unwillingness to accept reasonable compromises and an intention to hold on to 70 per cent of the territory which has ended up in Bosnian Serb hands as a result of the war. If you do opt for war ... we must state just as firmly that you will not in that case be able to count on Russia. As real friends, we only support fair play. Russia will not support injustice.<sup>15</sup>

But the Bosnian Serbs again rejected the deal.

This shows that it is simply not true that all sides were equally responsible for the failure to achieve a just end to the war. Only one side rejected proposed settlements that Russian diplomats themselves endorsed. A 'balanced' approach was therefore incoherent in terms of Russia's own principles. The important distinction here is between 'neutrality' – not getting involved in the conflict or not having a preference for any particular outcome – and 'impartiality' – advocating moral principles that were impartial with respect to the particular sides (i.e. were not in essence 'anti-Serb') but might require action against one or more of the sides if they were violating the principles.

In other words, given the nature of the conflict and the divergent aims of the sides, it was impossible to be both 'neutral' and 'impartial'. Yet this is precisely what Russian policy makers claimed that Russian policy was supposed to be. The contradiction is shown in a comment by the First Secretary of the European Department of the MFA, A. S. Botianovskii, writing in early 1996:

From the very beginning, Russia's political objectives were a just and peaceful settlement of the conflict, a balanced stand towards all the opposing parties, and equal consideration of their respective interests.<sup>16</sup>

Russia's own policy demanded impartiality but it could not be 'balanced' (neutral) with equal consideration of the parties' perceived interests (i.e. their aims) once Russia had committed itself to a just outcome

A demonstration of the problem is the way in which, in the name of 'balance', Russian diplomats criticised UNPROFOR and NATO for not responding to 'Muslim'

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<sup>15</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (14 June 1994).

<sup>16</sup> Botianovskii (1996), p. 129.



military offensives in the same way that they responded to Bosnian Serb actions. In September 1995, Yeltsin asked:

why is it that ... the Muslims deploy 20,000 men against the Bosnian Serbs – and yet there are no sanctions against them, no-one is bombing them, and no questions are asked. Why only the Serbs?<sup>17</sup>

The answer was, that it was only the Serbs who had refused to accept the peace deals endorsed by the 'international community'. They held over seventy per cent of the territory and would not cede it. The 'international community' would not impose a settlement. Therefore, the only way for the government to gain what everybody recognised as just was to continue fighting, which required mounting offensives. The Russian insistence on 'balance' meant accepting Serb gains that the Russians themselves rejected.

Russian diplomats even admitted that the Serbs would not cede without strong coercion the territory that they had conquered. For example, Alexei Nikiforov – one of the MFA's representatives in the Contact Group – believed that the only action that would persuade the Serbs to give up territory was a Federation military victory.<sup>18</sup> Yet the Russian administration refused to endorse an air campaign or the deployment of ground troops to aid the Bosnian government, and it did not want to allow the government to fight to reclaim the territory to which Russia recognised it had a right.

However much Russian policy makers tried to hint that stronger measures might be taken, they continued to refuse to support the measures that were necessary to enforce a settlement. The main problem was that the Russian side – but not only the Russians – refused to endorse the means necessary to achieve the aims that they themselves had agreed were just and legitimate: first, the application of the London principles, and then a reasonable division of the country.

### **Sacrifice of ends to means**

In 1992, Kozyrev fluctuated between suggesting that enforcement action might be necessary in Bosnia, and warning that force would not solve matters and that political methods must be pursued. No doubt, at that time Russian policy makers were genuinely concerned about the consequences of intervention, although the repeated pronouncements that there should be a peaceful resolution of the crisis were somewhat

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<sup>17</sup> *Radio Russia* (8 September 1995).

<sup>18</sup> Ludlow (1995), note 69.



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bizarre given the war raging at the time, as this cartoon in *Moskovskie novosti* (2-9 July 1995) illustrates (picture 1).

**Picture 1** 'I would intervene, but I'm afraid of provoking bloodshed'

(The cartoon refers to the EU's response to the conflicts, but it could apply equally to the Russian MFA, at least while it considered the possibility of intervention.)

By 1994, it is hard to believe that the Russian arguments against enforcement action were made in good faith. During the NATO air strikes in September 1995, Russian diplomats repeatedly claimed that the operation would not contribute towards the conclusion of a peace deal. Lavrov, for example, stated: 'It is very difficult to follow the logic that the increasing use of force will motivate the hostile parties to settle down at the peace table'.<sup>19</sup> And Yeltsin proclaimed:

Bombing has never produced the necessary result and such a conflict cannot be resolved by force – otherwise there will be a 100-year war, which would spread to other countries in Europe.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (7 September 1995).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



Just over a month later, the sides agreed to a cease-fire and shortly thereafter, the hostile parties 'settled down at the peace table' in Dayton.

As many commentators have pointed out, it is an inaccurate and dangerous simplification to believe that the NATO air strikes were the key action that led to the Dayton agreement; that, in the words of US Secretary of State Warren Christopher, this was the beginning of an era of 'diplomacy backed by force'.<sup>21</sup> Arbatova writes:

Western experts and politicians, evaluating the causes of the defeat of the Bosnian Serbs, single out the role of the NATO bombardments. All the same, it seems that other factors played the decisive role. These were – the simultaneous offensives of the government forces of Croatia and Bosnia on two fronts, depriving the Krajina and Bosnian Serbs of the possibility to help each other, and, undoubtedly, the neutral position of President Milošević, who did not want to jeopardise the prospective change of sanctions regime in relation to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia because of the intractability and ambitions of the Bosnian Serbs.<sup>22</sup>

This is a fair point, although the fact that air strikes were not the sole cause of the 'defeat' does not mean that they were not a contributing factor (they were probably necessary but not sufficient). Mike Bowker gives the same list with the addition of the involvement of Washington in negotiations.<sup>23</sup> And Pauline Neville-Jones writes:

the use of air-power depended on these indispensable conditions: the willingness to abandon peacekeepers' impartiality; reinforcing ground troops to make the risk acceptable; Belgrade's acquiescence; and reviving the peace process to pre-empt further deterioration of the situation on the ground.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, Russian diplomats opposed or were sceptical about every one of these developments. Russia sought to prevent any Muslim or Croat offensive. The offensive could only work because, by then, both the Croatian and Bosnian forces had surreptitiously re-armed; but Russia always opposed lifting the arms embargo and was critical of any illegal re-armament. Russia wanted sanctions lifted before any deal was signed, but the promise of lifting sanctions after a deal had been reached was the very incentive that forced Milošević to abandon support of the Bosnian Serbs, as Arbatova notes. Russian diplomats refused to acknowledge the importance of the American diplomatic efforts, presenting them as a continuation of Contact Group diplomacy. They abstained on the resolution on the formation of the RRF that reinforced ground troops,

<sup>21</sup> Gankin (1-8 October 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Arbatova (1998b), p. 79.

<sup>23</sup> Bowker (1998), p. 1257.

<sup>24</sup> Neville-Jones (1996-97), p. 48.



and rejected any moves to abandon peacekeepers' impartiality. And Russia was absolutely opposed to an air campaign.

Repeatedly, Russian diplomats warned of the possible consequences if the arms embargo was lifted or if there was military intervention. The implicit assumption was that, in those circumstances, Russia would have supported the Bosnian Serbs; yet, nobody explained why Russian policy makers should feel obliged to support them, particularly if they recognised that the Bosnian Serbs were the party obstructing a peace settlement. But these warnings served two distinct purposes. They were directed partly at domestic critics to avert calls for open support of the Serbs, which the government did not want. And they were also directed internationally, with the aim of preventing any moves towards intervention or lifting the arms embargo. In this case, they were used as a tool to prevent action that they did not want anyway.

### **Domestic motives for opposition to enforcement measures**

There were some divisions within the administration over these issues. Diplomats most closely involved with conflict management in former Yugoslavia were more likely to endorse stronger enforcement action, both for a universal settlement and for local settlements (in the 'safe areas'). This was partly because they were more influenced by Western colleagues. It was also because they felt the isolation of their position in international fora. And they felt increasingly frustrated, slighted, and used by the Bosnian Serbs. This was true of Vitalii Churkin in particular, who called for enforcement action after the Goražde episode in April 1994. And the position of Iulii Vorontsov, Russia's representative on the Security Council until 1994, was interesting. During the Sarajevo crisis of February 1994, despite all the protests against the NATO ultimatum in Moscow, Vorontsov said that he would not attempt to stop military action by trying to force a UNSC vote, and claimed that Boutros-Ghali was 'absolutely right' to assert his authority to call for NATO air strikes.<sup>25</sup> Stan Markotich explains this by Vorontsov's proximity to the situation at the UN and his realisation that he would not be able to persuade the other Security Council members that a new resolution and vote were necessary. In addition, 'the contrast between Vorontsov's tone and that of officials in Moscow can be explained by the difference in the audiences at which their statements were directed'.<sup>26</sup> This seemed to be confirmed by US State Department spokesman M.

<sup>25</sup> *The New York Times*, 11 February 1994, quoted in Markotich (25 February 1994), p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> Markotich (25 February 1994), p. 10.



McCurry who pointed out that Russian officials openly speak one thing about Bosnia and something else in contacts with the American administration.<sup>27</sup>

It is reasonable to assert that the sacrifice of ends to means was favoured by Yeltsin himself (and followed loyally by Kozyrev<sup>28</sup>). We have seen that he attacked the MFA on at least two occasions at a time when it was also being criticised by domestic opponents. Yeltsin also refused to endorse any enforcement action after the Goražde events in April 1994. These choices were made primarily for political reasons. Yeltsin did not want to allow his position to be threatened by an issue that he did not consider to be vital for Russia. Without being as cynical as Milošević in his use of nationalist rhetoric, Yeltsin was a populist who was prepared to make changes in policy and dramatic statements to appeal to nationalist sentiments, all the while making sure that he did not abandon co-operation with the West.

Whether such tactics were really necessary is difficult to evaluate. The Communists posed the greatest threat to Yeltsin in the December 1995 elections and also in the presidential election due in mid 1996, and they adopted a nationalist line and attacked the government with this. There was detailed coverage of the Yugoslav conflicts in the media, usually with a pro-Serb slant. But Yeltsin probably overestimated the degree to which adopting what would be perceived as an 'anti-Serb' line would have been an electoral liability. The voting public was not sufficiently concerned with the Yugoslav conflicts to make them an important issue in elections.

Perhaps more significant was the fact that Yeltsin needed to garner support from state centric and neo-realist politicians, both outside the administration – such as Vladimir Lukin – and also within it – such as Evgenii Primakov, who was head of the Foreign Intelligence Service but replaced Kozyrev as Foreign Minister in January 1996. They were broadly in favour of Yeltsin's domestic policy but demanded a more assertive foreign policy.

The other main reason why Russian policy makers did not want enforcement action was the role of NATO. This is the one area where it does make sense to talk of Russian interests in former Yugoslavia distinct from Western interests. This was because of the significance of the conflicts for the evolution of the European security system after the Cold War.

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<sup>27</sup> *Bilten vesti*, 9 February 1993, p. 1, referred to in Gus'kova (1995a), p. 37.

<sup>28</sup> Iusin (21 October 1995).



## NATO, UNPROFOR, and the use of force

UNPROFOR began as a peace-keeping operation in Croatia. It then took a primary role in ensuring the delivery of humanitarian aid in Bosnia. In other words, its task was to mitigate the effects of the conflict. As Richard Caplan writes, the central problem with this approach is that 'it does nothing to stop the violence that is the source of suffering it is attempting to alleviate'.<sup>29</sup> The absurdity of the mission is shown unwittingly by a report on UNPROFOR's operations of 1994 by the UN Secretary-General:

Several of the newer tasks have placed UNPROFOR in a position of thwarting the military objectives of one party and therefore compromising its impartiality, which remains the key to its effectiveness in fulfilling its humanitarian responsibilities.<sup>30</sup>

Those 'humanitarian responsibilities' resulted from the pursuit of those 'military objectives', but Boutros-Ghali seemed to think that tackling those objectives would jeopardise dealing with the results of them!

Although humanitarian assistance and protection no doubt saved lives in the absence of any other intervention, it was used as a substitute for political and military action.<sup>31</sup> In 1993, a choice was made against enforcement of an overall peace settlement. However, pressure to act led to the 'safe areas' policy. This was designed to protect the civilian population of six key areas, all predominantly Muslim, and all under siege from Serb forces. It implied drawing the line and saying that these areas would not be subject to 'ethnic cleansing'. The resolutions in fact allowed for enforcement action to protect the 'safe areas', but insufficient numbers of troops were provided to protect them. Therefore, the UN envisaged the use of air power, which meant NATO. Air strikes were carried out against Serb forces when they attacked or shelled the 'safe areas'. Each time, Russia objected that the UN was guilty of 'double standards' because strikes were only against the Serbs. But this was not surprising, since it was the Serbs that were besieging the areas.

Russian politicians and commentators were right to highlight the lack of condemnation of the Croat offensives in Krajina and Western Slavonia on the part of Western governments, particularly the US. This was partly the result of bias, partly a feeling that the Serbs in Krajina had by their earlier actions ('ethnic cleansing' and the shelling of Vukovar and Dubrovnik) lost the moral right to any support (which is understandable but wrong), a sense that it was a case of suppression of an internal

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<sup>29</sup> Caplan (1996), p. 36.

<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Weller (1998).

<sup>31</sup> Caplan (1996), p. 37.



insurrection, and also a feeling that it would be the quickest and easiest solution. This latter point was also perhaps a factor in Srebrenica and Žepa. In other words, Western governments preferred to accept the formation of an acceptable map by force rather than impose it themselves. In this respect, as I have argued, the Krajina case and Srebrenica are the same (although it could be argued that in Krajina, the Croatian government was re-establishing control of an area within its recognised borders, whereas in Srebrenica, the insurgents seized control from the government).

The assaults on Krajina and Srebrenica marked the failure of UNPROFOR, showing that the 'protected areas' were not protected, the 'safe areas' not safe. This was partly due to a shortage of troops, but also because of weak-willed UN leadership and restrictions on the use of force. These were partly a result of Russian demands. Russian policy makers would not allow force to be used effectively for the policy of deterrence to work, despite having voted for the establishment of the 'safe areas'. They explicitly refused to support any proposals to simplify the procedure for requests by the UN to NATO for air support.<sup>32</sup>

This insistence not just on the cumbersome 'dual key' system, but also the involvement of the UN Secretary-General and consultations with the permanent Security Council members, was in marked contrast to Russia's own approach in conflicts in the former Soviet Union. As Pavel Baev writes:

Perhaps one strong impulse coming from the UNPROFOR experience is that against multilateralism as such. While persisting in claims for legitimisation and even financial support from the UN and the CSCE, the Russian leadership has the clear intention to preserve its freedom of action in peace-making activities.<sup>33</sup>

But it did everything it could to deny such freedom of action not only to NATO but also to UNPROFOR and the national contingents within it.

In order to protect the 'safe areas', the use of force by peace-keepers, and also close air support, were necessary. Russia sought to restrict this because it would make the United Nations seem 'partial' and also because of the role of NATO. NATO was the obvious organisation to implement air cover, particularly as it was enforcing the no-fly zone. No doubt this pleased NATO personnel and American diplomats because it gave NATO a new role. But by attempting to restrict UNPROFOR's use of force in the limited sense provided for in existing UNSC resolutions – air support to ensure the

<sup>32</sup> Russian Federation MFA (14 April 1994). If anybody doubts the absurdity of the authorisation arrangements, they should read Honig and Both (1996), chapter 1.

<sup>33</sup> Baev (1996a), p. 77.



protection of peace-keepers, the supply of humanitarian aid, and protection of the 'safe areas' – Russia undermined UNPROFOR and the Security Council (which had created the 'safe areas') and thereby promoted NATO. Thus, the result of the policy was precisely the opposite of that intended.

Kozyrev and Yeltsin both expressed their concerns about the implications for the United Nations of NATO's air campaign of September 1995. Kozyrev warned the Security Council that

attempts to monopolise the solution of international problems by one state or a group of states, to introduce 'double standards' on the principle of dividing the world into 'us' and 'them', to count on military alliance rather than strengthening the UN, may turn out to be no less dangerous for the integrity of the world and the work of the Security Council, than the 'Cold War'.<sup>34</sup>

And Yeltsin conveyed the same message at the special fiftieth anniversary session of the UN General Assembly:

A dangerous trend towards belittling the role of the UN and acting in circumvention of its charter and the Security Council's collective will has emerged...

Russia is alarmed over situations like that which arose recently in Bosnia when the Security Council was sidelined. This was a clear and blatant violation of the foundations of the world organisation laid down by its creators.

It is intolerable for a regional organisation, bypassing the Security Council, to take a decision on the massive use of force.<sup>35</sup>

Of course, these points were true, if exaggerated. But Russia's refusal to allow effective functioning of UNPROFOR and implementation of Security Council resolutions had done more to threaten the work of the Security Council than NATO's belated air campaign. Yeltsin continued: 'Military force must not intrude where diplomacy has not had time to operate'.<sup>36</sup> The point is fair. But one wonders when Russia would ever have believed that diplomacy had had sufficient time in Bosnia.

Contrary to Yeltsin's claim, there was no 'collective will' of the Security Council. Rather, most states saw the need for action against the Bosnian Serbs, but Russia threatened to veto it. Kozyrev himself recognised Russia's isolation:

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<sup>34</sup> Russian Federation MFA (26 September 1995).

<sup>35</sup> Russian Federation MFA (22 October 1995).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*



The political point is that NATO really has shown some haste... On the other hand, it must be taken into account that at the UN, our voice is as yet a lone one, that is, the majority of members of that organisation – be it the Security Council ... or the General Assembly ... – everywhere the voting, whenever it has been held in the last few years, has been extremely anti-Serb.<sup>37</sup>

Yugoslavia was one of the places where a more active United Nations role was experimented with during the 1990s. Michael Williams shows the implications of its failure in a review of Michael Rose's *Fighting for Peace*:

There are few who would agree with Michael Rose that UNPROFOR was a success. How is success to be judged when UNPROFOR's ultimate tragic conclusion was the slaughter in Srebrenica in July 1995 and an effective end to peacekeeping as a brave experiment of the 1990s? Today there is no hope of the Security Council establishing a peacekeeping mission, at least of the UN itself, anywhere in the world. In none of the sixteen existing peace missions is the UN central to the resolution of the conflict as it was, or at least tried to be, in Cambodia, Mozambique, Angola, Somalia, Haiti, El Salvador, and Bosnia in the early 1990s... There is little doubt that the ultimate failure of UNPROFOR has been a major contributory factor in the decline of UN peacekeeping, now at a level where it was in 1990.<sup>38</sup>

Russia contributed to the failure of UNPROFOR and thereby undermined the United Nations, which it supposedly saw as the keystone of the international system.

## The missed opportunity

From 1993, one of the main aims of Russian foreign policy was to prevent NATO expansion. NATO expansion alienated Russia and made it suspicious of NATO action in the Balkans. This was heightened by the declarations of NATO leaders themselves who talked of NATO's new role 'out of area', its new role in peace-keeping, but linked this also to NATO expansion.<sup>39</sup>

The best way to have assuaged Russian suspicions of NATO and to have demonstrated a positive example of co-operation would have been to perform a joint enforcement action in former Yugoslavia. This needed to be early in order to prevent 'ethnic cleansing'; when a crisis becomes so acute that intervention is seen as essential,

<sup>37</sup> *Russian Public TV* (25 September 1995).

<sup>38</sup> Williams (1999), p. 381.

<sup>39</sup> Simić (1998); Gow (1997b).



‘it puts any satisfactory outcome significantly beyond reach’.<sup>40</sup> In the case of Bosnia, preventative action should have occurred before Bosnia-Herzegovina was recognised as an independent state; the government had requested an international peace-keeping force to forestall war, but the request was ignored.<sup>41</sup> When the republic was recognised, the government should at least have been given the chance to defend itself (by lifting the arms embargo).<sup>42</sup>

Preventative deployment is rare because politicians do not feel pressure to act until war has already started. Preventive action did not occur in Bosnia. But when war broke out in a horrific manner in April 1992, peace-making action should have been authorised.

At that stage, Russia agreed with the Western powers that the war was caused by Serbian aggression, as was shown by the sanctions vote. There were signs that the Russian MFA might even have accepted a peace-making mission. Kozyrev, as we have seen, gave hints that peace enforcement to ensure human rights might be legitimate in some cases and might actually be possible after the end of the Cold War. It would be in Russia’s interests because it would show that ‘ethnic cleansing’ would not be tolerated, which was good for Russian speakers in the ‘near abroad’. And it could demonstrate a positive example of co-operation between Russia and NATO under the authority of the UN or the CSCE, which was for Russia the ideal framework for the new European security structure.

Such a possibility appeared to arise in June 1992 when Presidents Bush and Yeltsin signed the Washington Charter of Russian-American Partnership and Friendship. The Charter included a section that mentioned the creation of ‘Euro-Atlantic peace-making forces’ that would include American and Russian contingents. Maksim Iusin described this as a ‘sensational declaration’:

We are talking about an event of enormous significance – the creation of an instrument for containing regional conflicts that could become a most important factor in international life in the near future.<sup>43</sup>

Unfortunately, it did not become a highly important factor in international life. There was no political will among the Western powers for a true peace enforcement mission.<sup>44</sup> Even if there had been, the United States preferred to use NATO for any

<sup>40</sup> Caplan (1996), p. 37.

<sup>41</sup> Freedman (1994-95), p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>43</sup> Iusin (19 June 1992).

<sup>44</sup> According to Lawrence Freedman, the ‘impending presidential election stanching any willingness on the part of the US administration to take risks’; Freedman (1994-95), p. 61.



action in Yugoslavia, rather than develop a real partnership with Russia. And Russia soon also preferred to have an exclusive role in the former Soviet Union; consequently, it was wary of a joint mission with NATO in former Yugoslavia because this might set a precedent for NATO involvement in the former Soviet Union. This shows how the shift to a neo-realist position in the 'near abroad' affected policy to former Yugoslavia.

June 1992 therefore marks a key turning point both for the fate of Bosnia and also for the post-Cold War European security system. I am doubtful that Russia really would have agreed to participate in a peace-making operation that would necessarily have appeared to be 'anti-Serb'. The outcry in the élite at the sanctions vote seems to suggest not. Yugoslavia was not considered an important enough issue to risk the domestic attack that such actions would have provoked, and the Yeltsin administration could not feel politically secure. The Russian military establishment also would have opposed such action, and Yeltsin had to be careful not to offend it since he would depend on it in any future clash with the 'intransigent opposition'. It was hard enough to get the General Staff to accept involvement in peace-keeping in Sector East in Croatia, let alone peace enforcement in Bosnia.

But the Western powers should have tried. Had Western politicians been more attentive to the needs of Bosnia rather than on building the EU and NATO, and also sought a genuine security partnership with Russia, they might have made such a proposal. If it had been accepted, it would have been a positive step for Russian-Western relations and for Bosnia. And if the Russians had declined to participate, at this stage they might well not have vetoed the action as long as they had been consulted.

## **Russia's role in conflict mediation**

Western commentators are divided over the degree to which Russia should have been involved in conflict resolution in the former Yugoslavia. Some suggest that Russia was pushed aside in decision making; that the main Russian objection to the NATO ultimatum in February 1994, for example, was that it had not been consulted. They argue also that Russia was in fact a positive contributor to the mediation process. For example, Mike Bowker writes:

Moscow's role was never as important as that of the USA, or even that of Britain or France, but Russia did play a part in bringing the war to an end. Contrary to the view of the sceptics, Yugoslavia showed that Moscow was able to play a positive role in European security even at times of great domestic crisis.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Bowker (1998), p. 1259.



But it is actually difficult to find much positive that Russia contributed to international mediation in the Yugoslav crises. Its early approach was admirable, especially as it marked such a radical departure from [pre-New Political Thinking] Soviet diplomacy. Its recognition of Macedonia was a bold and justifiable move. And its support of the Vance-Owen peace plan and involvement in the negotiation process showed that it was seriously committed to the elaboration of a plan that would go at least some way towards preventing the division of Bosnia and victory for the nationalists. Churkin in particular was knowledgeable and contributed to the negotiation process.

But, after the failure of the VOPP, Russian diplomats were more of a hindrance than an aid. Rather than 'playing a part in bringing the war to an end', they contributed to its extension.

Bowker also claims that

Russia's policy towards Yugoslavia can be criticised for giving succour to the aggressors in the conflict. It was a policy based on *Realpolitik* rather than morality... Yet, in the overall context of the international effort, Russia's policies were defensible. For Moscow's continued links with Belgrade served a useful purpose. No negotiated settlement was possible without Serb compliance... It was important ... that the Serbs were not isolated and that their interests were represented in international fora, such as the UN and the Contact Group.<sup>46</sup>

There is some truth in this, but the issue of relations with the Serb side is problematic.

### **Relations with Belgrade**

At the heart of the issue was the relationship between Russian diplomats, the Serbian government, and the Bosnian Serbs. In 1992, Russia supported the moderate federal leadership of the FRY. After the December elections in Serbia, Russian policy makers put pressure on Milošević, with positive results. Milošević backed the VOPP and also the Contact Group plan. How much this was due to Russian pressure and how much to sanctions is difficult to evaluate, but the limitations of the strategy were demonstrated by the Bosnian Serb refusal to accept either of those plans. In other words, neither Russia nor Milošević had sufficient control over the Bosnian Serbs for the tactic to succeed in ending the war in Bosnia, although it was worth putting pressure on Belgrade anyway.

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1246.



The tactic was also undermined by contradictory signals from Moscow. According to the MFA, Russian action both as part of the Contact Group and on a bilateral footing was important for seeking acceptance of the Contact Group map, with visits by Grachev and Churkin to the region.<sup>47</sup> But they failed to convince the Bosnian Serbs to accept. This was not surprising if Karadžić's account of his meeting with Grachev is true. According to Karadžić, Grachev told him: 'You must accept the Plan because if they attack you we will have to defend you, which would cause problems for us'; it would mean a new political and, possibly, military confrontation in the Balkans, and a dangerous stand-off between Russia and the West. Karadžić said that he left the meeting confident that the 'Russian Army was supporting us. We knew that before, but now it was clear that the Russian Army had a sympathetic ear for the Serbs.'<sup>48</sup>

After Belgrade broke off relations with Pale, Russia rightly argued for some reward for the FRY's stance, but its calls for full lifting of sanctions were premature as the pressure needed to be maintained. Russia talked of a 'differentiated' approach which was quite necessary, but required far more pressure to be exerted on the Bosnian Serbs, which Russia was not prepared to accept. In fact, it was clear that Russia would oppose any stronger enforcement action. However much they tried to avoid stating this directly so that the Bosnian Serbs would not feel that they could act with impunity, that was precisely the effect.

There are other problems. The idea of Russia working closely with the Serbs may have seemed useful but it reinforced the notion that Russia would naturally support the Serb side.<sup>49</sup> David Owen in particular took this for granted, to the extent that he was surprised whenever Russia agreed to something that the Bosnian Serbs and also the Krajina Serbs might not accept.<sup>50</sup> In fact, Churkin was unhappy about the idea when the Contact Group was formed, which was just after the Goražde events, and he refused to go on the joint Contact Group visit to Bosnia because he would have to meet the Bosnian Serb leaders. Nikiforov went instead, but he was also unwilling to serve as their 'patron'.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, we have seen that Yeltsin resisted any move towards a stronger line and the severance of relations with the Bosnian Serbs. Only when the FRY government announced that it was ending relations did Russia follow. In other words,

<sup>47</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (26 July 1994).

<sup>48</sup> Silber and Little (1996), p. 341.

<sup>49</sup> For a similar argument, see Woodward (1995), p. 306.

<sup>50</sup> Owen (4 June 1994) and (28 October 1994).

<sup>51</sup> Ludlow (1995).



rather than exerting pressure on the FRY, the Russian administration followed Milošević's lead, or at least checked with Milošević before acting.<sup>52</sup>

The hypothesis that the Serbian authorities were manipulating Russia is particularly credible when we look at the diplomacy in 1995. Serbia itself realised, when the US became intent on a settlement, where the real power lay. As Abarinov wrote:

gone are the days when Moscow, by puffing up its cheeks, could act as if it had some exclusive influence with Belgrade, as though we were the only ones Milošević would receive and hold serious talks with. When Milošević needed something more than a smokescreen, when things reached the point of political bargaining ... the Belgrade leader received the Americans warmly.<sup>53</sup>

Milošević even went so far as to disparage the quality of Russian aid, much to the chagrin of Grigorii Karasin who was 'unpleasantly surprised'.<sup>54</sup>

### **Limits of Russian involvement**

Some commentators believe that the problems with Russian policy meant that Russia should not have been involved in conflict management at all. For example, Alexander Rahr wrote in reference to 1994:

Russia tried to play world leader in several conflicts throughout the year... However, most of the efforts were poorly planned and proved counterproductive. For example, instead of co-operating with the West to solve the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Russia took a pro-Serbian stance and damaged the efficiency of UN mediation efforts. Moscow's meddling nonetheless gave it a high profile on the international scene.<sup>55</sup>

But Russia is a permanent member of the Security Council. Its involvement in the UN mediation efforts can hardly be called 'meddling'.

Russia had to be involved in some way, but its involvement was likely to hinder efforts to achieve a settlement. The dilemma is well revealed by Holbrooke in his inimitable fashion. He writes that if 'Moscow secured an active role in the negotiations, it could cause a serious problem, given its pro-Serb attitude'.<sup>56</sup> Consequently, Moscow must not have an active role. On the same page he writes:

<sup>52</sup> Churkin apparently checked the Contact Group map with Milošević before accepting; *ibid.*, and Owen (1995b).

<sup>53</sup> Abarinov (8 September 1995).

<sup>54</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (3 November 1995). According to Holbrooke, Milošević was 'scornful of Moscow's attempts to pressure or bribe the Serbs with aid – "tons of rotten meat, and crap like that," he said'; Holbrooke (1998), p. 114.

<sup>55</sup> Rahr (15 February 1995), p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> Holbrooke (1998), p. 117.



Behind our efforts to include Russia in the Bosnia negotiating process lay a fundamental belief on the part of the Clinton Administration that it was essential to find the proper place for Russia in Europe's security structure, something it had not been part of since 1914.<sup>57</sup>

Behind the self-flattery and the contradictions lies a genuine problem. Russia had to be involved, particularly as a permanent member of the Security Council. But if it was blocking a settlement, it would have to be side-lined. The American solution in 1995 was to avoid joint negotiations altogether. This applied not only to Russia, but also to the European members of the Contact Group. At the beginning of his diplomatic offensive, Holbrooke notes, the other members of the Contact Group 'were disturbed that we planned to negotiate first and consult them later, reversing the previous procedure, in which the five nations tried to work out a common position *before* taking it to the parties in the Balkans – a system that was cumbersome and unworkable'.<sup>58</sup> The Americans condescendingly allowed the other powers to have a symbolic role, although they apparently called the demands by Italy and Russia to hold a Contact Group meeting 'conference proliferation', and 'complained constantly about it as time-consuming and redundant', but they 'recognised that these meetings were important for European-American unity'.<sup>59</sup> In other words, the other members would have to let the American team negotiate a settlement with the parties and then agree to it. This was the 'uni-polar' world that the Russians feared. But it had the advantage of achieving peace in Bosnia.

I have shown that from 1993 the Russian aim was to use the conflict to show Russia's great power importance, which policy makers believed was in Russia's interests. Other powers also put their notion of national interests above the need to find a just and early settlement. And this was despite the hopes of a new era in which international humanitarian law could be applied universally. The fundamental problem is that the United Nations Security Council is a forum in which states pursue their national interests. Western policy makers might have felt the need to act, and were guided less by notions of traditional interests than their Russian counterparts, but even when they did feel obliged to pass resolutions in such cases, they did not follow them through.<sup>60</sup>

The situation can only be changed by creating some sort of institution that will act more impartially. One possibility is a wider Security Council, perhaps without allowing

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>60</sup> A similar point is made by Caplan (1996), pp. 32-3.



the great powers a veto right. Or the General Assembly might be given more powers. There is now a discrepancy between the development of international humanitarian law and the status of the institution of ultimate arbitration (the Security Council). For the legal aspects, a more impartial body is needed to judge cases in line with international humanitarian law. In the recognition process, that body existed: the Badinter commission. But Western powers ignored its rulings, and thereby aroused suspicions from the very start that they were pursuing their own interests. The creation of a kind of 'Supreme Court' of legal experts rather than representatives of states might be one solution. Finally, chapter VII of the UN charter contains a commitment from member states to provide armed forces for enforcement operations, but states do not honour their commitments, as was evident in the 'safe areas'. The creation of some sort of permanent UN peace-making force, paid and organised directly by the United Nations, is worth investigating.<sup>61</sup>

In the meantime, Western powers might have to act without Russia, and therefore without sanction from the Security Council, for two reasons. Firstly, Western European states have been affected more by the conflicts in former Yugoslavia than Russia was, particularly through the arrival of refugees, and Western European countries would also be affected more if the conflict spread beyond Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo.

Secondly, if Russia acts on the basis of principles that are widely divergent from the values of humanitarian international law, those values – and, ultimately, the victims of regional conflicts – should not be sacrificed to those Russian principles. Under Yeltsin, Russia adopted a policy based on promoting Russia's great power interests. This took precedence over the achievement of a just solution. The order of priorities was shown in February 1994 when Russian diplomats used the crisis to demonstrate Russia's prestige and importance. Churkin later explained his motivation as follows:

To be honest, when I was working on this problem, the main thing I was trying to prevent was a national humiliation for Russia. Not a further escalation in Bosnia – although I didn't want that, of course, and I had clear instructions on that score – but a humiliation for Russia. After all, given our current low-esteem, if everything had been done without us yet again, the consequences could have been graver for us than for the Bosnians.<sup>62</sup>

I do not think that the residents of Sarajevo would agree. This approach was at odds with moral demands and the demands of international humanitarian law.

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<sup>61</sup> Glover (1999), chapter 16.

<sup>62</sup> Molchanovyi (16 March 1994).



The need to uphold the principles of humanitarian law and to prevent the spread of conflicts may make it imperative for Western states to act without Russian support. But if they do act unilaterally, they need to elaborate clearly the reasons for intervention, both in terms of humanitarian law and security interests. And they need to apply these principles consistently. And, if they use NATO, they should not present it as the cornerstone of the new European security structure.

Again, the important point is to develop impartial means of applying international law. The distinction between this law and the attitude prevalent among many Russian commentators, academics, and politicians was highlighted by the indictment of Mladić and Karadžić. As we have seen, Yeltsin questioned the legitimacy of this act. Karadžić and Mladić were almost certainly responsible for the murder of thousands of innocent civilians. It is precisely because they are 'covered with glory' (as one Russian commentator argued in opposing the indictment)<sup>63</sup> as a result of perpetrating such crimes, that they must be tried in the Hague if international law is to have any validity and if the nationalist project is to be defeated.

## Forms of Russian involvement

The question of the direction of Russia's foreign policy became a subject of intense debate towards the end of 1995, when NATO expansion, the future role of Russia in Bosnia, the likely replacement of Kozyrev, and the forthcoming elections created the impression that a change of approach was necessary. The debate focused in particular on Russia's position in the world, and the Yugoslav conflicts and Russian interests in the region were considered in this context.

Some commentators argued that it was in Russia's interests to concentrate on domestic re-building. For example, Iurii Borko, deputy director of the Institute of Europe (RAN) wrote in September 1995:

Post-war Soviet diplomacy grew accustomed to operating under conditions of weakness. In fact, it always proceeded from exaggerated notions of the country's might, which led to a whole series of erroneous strategic decisions. It seems as if Russian diplomacy today is trying to compensate for the position of weakness through an obsessive effort to prove on a daily basis that Russia remains a 'great power'. It is difficult to say whether this approach was chosen deliberately or is a

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<sup>63</sup> Vasil'evskii (8 December 1995).



carry-over from the past, but in practice it looks like a strange mixture of arrogance and fuss-making.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, some realist critics believed that precisely because of Russia's economic weakness, it was necessary to pursue an assertive foreign policy. For them, the Balkans were not just an area of Russian interests, but Russian involvement there was a sign of Russia's foreign policy strength and its global great power status. Lukin, for example, criticised Kozyrev's foreign policy (when Yeltsin hinted that he was due to replace the Foreign Minister in October 1995) thus: 'there have been moments in history when Russia was weak, but it had a strong foreign policy. In the present period, since the beginning of the 1990s, Russia has been weak and has had a weak foreign policy.'<sup>65</sup> Volobuev and Tiagunenکو make a similar point in February 1992: 'in other times, such as after the civil war, we were much weaker and poorer than we are now, but we had no shortage of national pride and independence'.<sup>66</sup> And Aleksei Pushkov writes: 'Historically, foreign policy activity had always compensated for Russia's economic weakness.'<sup>67</sup>

Pushkov claimed that there were two alternatives to Kozyrev's foreign policy course. The radical one was a complete break with the United States, the creation of a military bloc of CIS countries in response to NATO expansion, an emphasis in foreign policy and trade on countries such as Iraq and Iran, a military alliance with the Bosnian Serbs, and perhaps a strategic alliance with China on an anti-American basis. However, this would be dangerous and unworkable because it would require money and resources that Russia did not have. The other alternative 'can be defined as a line aimed at carefully considered self-removal from the ranks of active players in the world', very close to that outlined by Borko. For Pushkov,

[s]uch a policy would unquestionably be preferable for Russia and more acceptable for the Western world. However, it underestimates the significance of foreign policy activity from the standpoint of the domestic political struggle and seems much too passive to engender any kind of serious support within the country. In addition, there is a risk that the element of self-limitation that it contains, although reasonable, could take the form of the renunciation of Russian participation in any

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<sup>64</sup> Borko (10-17 September 1995).

<sup>65</sup> Zhuravlev (20 October 1995).

<sup>66</sup> Volobuev and Tiagunenکو (28 February 1992).

<sup>67</sup> Pushkov (16 November 1995).



serious games on such important geo-political playing fields as the Balkans or the Middle East.<sup>68</sup>

The problem with this debate is that – like the debate in 1992 – it was concerned with what areas Russia should be involved in, rather than how it should deal with them. Mostly, it was conducted from a neo-realist standpoint. Pushkov makes some pertinent points, but he assumes that if Russia is to be involved in the Balkans, then it will be on a zero-sum model (he sees this as necessary because the West acted from geo-political considerations from 1988 to 1992, driving Russia out of its areas of influence).

Such analysis presents a very crude and simplistic picture. What exactly is meant by Russia's 'position in the Balkans'? And what did it mean, as Ziuganov said, that the Dayton agreement not only 'sidelined' Russia but 'kicked it out of the Balkans altogether'<sup>69</sup>? Concentrating on domestic re-building did not have to mean 'abandoning' Russia's presence in the Balkans. There were strong arguments for Russia to remain involved in conflict resolution in the Balkans. For example, Russian involvement in post-Dayton Bosnia through IFOR and through the Contact Group would be important for its success, in particular so that it would not take the form of NATO 'imperialism'.

But Russian involvement does not have to be on the basis of a realist, zero-sum approach. The point is not that Russia needs to be involved in 'serious games on important geo-political playing fields', but that the supreme arbiter in the international system is the United Nations Security Council, on which Russia has a permanent seat. It is valid to speak of Russia as a global great power, but this does not mean that it has to compete with other great powers in regions of conflict, particularly when it lacks the resources to do so. On the contrary, it should co-operate and fulfil its duties as a great power.

Robert Legvold writes:

In the new foreign policy consensus ... no one bothers to focus on Russia's role in influencing for the better the coming international order. The constant preoccupation with Russia as a great power has largely become a matter of status without responsibility.<sup>70</sup>

But a return to the notion of great power *duties* as opposed to *rights* would actually give Russia higher prestige, more status. The shift of emphasis arose partly because of the perception that Russia was being 'sidelined' in mediation efforts in 1992. Yet, this was

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<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Parrish (12 July 1996), p. 22.

<sup>70</sup> Legvold (1994), p. 271.



not true. It was the UN Security Council that passed key resolutions. The UNSC established UNPROFOR. Certainly, the EC was the initial mediator, but this was abandoned anyway in 1992. The London Conference established Russia's role. It also set up the ICFY, which had a permanent negotiator appointed by the United Nations; as a member of the UNSC, Russia had a say in the ICFY negotiations. Russia was involved in the development of the VOPP and the Contact Group plan. As we have seen, Western powers placed great emphasis on Russian involvement.

It was only in summer 1995 that Russia was sidelined fully. This was because it was blocking the means required to achieve a settlement due to diplomats' insistence on protecting Russia's perceived interests and preserving an 'impartial' policy. In other words, Russia was excluded as a result of its neo-realist approach.

## After Dayton

Most Russian and Western commentators and policy makers believed that Russian participation in IFOR would be an important determinant for future Russian relations with NATO. For example, Nadia Arbatova wrote: 'The future of the NATO-Russia partnership is now at stake in Bosnia and Herzegovina. If it is successful, the IFOR operation will promote this partnership. If it is not, new confrontations will ensue.'<sup>71</sup> Churkin stated:

Over the next 12 months the attention of practically all the European institutions, including NATO, will be focused on Bosnian affairs. As to our relations with the North Atlantic bloc, a great deal will depend on whether we will manage to set in motion our co-operation with them in Bosnia...<sup>72</sup>

Western politicians and military personnel were, of course, entirely confident of the success of IFOR and of Russian participation within it. According to Grachev, after he had visited NATO headquarters, 'several defence ministers think that the viability of partnership between Russia and NATO will show itself in the Bosnian conflict'.<sup>73</sup> Thomas Petzold was sure that this would be a concrete example; he argued that 'Yeltsin, Grachev and Kozyrev believe NATO is on a road to success in Bosnia via the IFOR operations and they wish to get involved; reaping some of the winnings'.<sup>74</sup>

If IFOR had not succeeded in keeping the peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina, then it would certainly have had a negative impact on relations between Russia and NATO.

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<sup>71</sup> Arbatova (1996), p. 416.

<sup>72</sup> *Russia TV* (5 December 1995).

<sup>73</sup> *Russian Public TV* (3 December 1995).

<sup>74</sup> Petzold (31 October 1995).



But its success in bringing peace to Bosnia did not necessarily entail the wider partnership that these optimists assumed. Involvement in IFOR did, in fact, bring Russia into closer contact with NATO, particularly through its representatives at NATO headquarters and at SHAPE, and this laid the basis for the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997 and the creation of the Permanent Joint Council (which grew out of the Russian-NATO liaison in IFOR). But the problems with the Founding Act were similar to those with IFOR: the two sides had different views about what it signified. In relation to IFOR, this was evident from the start.

For Russian policy makers, involvement in IFOR would give Russia the opportunity to influence NATO. Put simply, NATO would change its attitude through contact with Russia. For example, Kozyrev said that co-operation gave Russia

the opportunity to defend our opinions on other issues as well. It also gives us the opportunity to influence NATO's evolution, because by co-operating with us on a wide range of issues, NATO will itself change in some way.<sup>75</sup>

For NATO policy makers, Russian involvement in IFOR would change the attitude of Russian policy makers through contact with NATO. According to Holbrooke, the agreement on Russian involvement 'not only made possible the Russian role in Bosnia but also went a long way to ameliorating Russian antagonism toward NATO enlargement'.<sup>76</sup>

Given the fundamentally different conceptions of the role of NATO in the post-Cold War world, it was unlikely that involvement in IFOR would make much difference. It was the military in particular that would gain experience of co-operation; but the percentage of personnel affected would be small, and attitudes of the General Staff in Moscow (and of many NATO officers) would not necessarily change. It was going to take a good deal more than the IFOR operation to overcome the kind of views expressed by Major-General Viktor Gromenkov:

NATO's muscle-flexing policy, the arbitrary expansion of the bloc's zone of responsibility, the policy of its eastward enlargement, are primarily spearheaded against Russia. Moreover, NATO, as a result of its intervention in the Balkan events, has obtained first-hand experience in conducting offensive operations on foreign territory... All this shows that NATO is not our possible partner, but is a direct threat to Russia's security. It does not ensure Europe's stability.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> *Ekho Moskvy* (5 December 1995).

<sup>76</sup> Holbrooke (1998), p. 259.

<sup>77</sup> *ITAR-TASS* (21 November 1995).



Even Colonel-General Shevtsov, who was very positive about the experience of co-operation in IFOR at a conference held in Russia in September 1996, said that 'practical implementation of the decision to enlarge NATO to the East is the main factor that can considerably undermine our newly formed confidence in each other'.<sup>78</sup>

This comment underlines what I have argued, that Russia's attitude to the Balkans had, since 1992, been determined primarily by considerations of the wider relationship with the West and Russia's position in world affairs. Its Balkan policy had tended to be a reflection rather than a cause of the wider position. In particular, resistance to NATO action in Bosnia came not so much because of opposition to such action *per se*, although this was an element, but because of opposition to NATO's activity in Europe as a whole. Furthermore, Russia had based its Yugoslav policy on neo-realist notions of Russian interest in the Balkans, distinct from those of the West. This would only be strengthened by Kozyrev's successor, Evgenii Primakov. Co-operation might work in Bosnia, but that did not mean that there would not be acute differences over policy elsewhere in the Balkans, especially as Russia sought to strengthen its links with Serbia.

At the start of 1996, the new Secretary-General of NATO, Javier Solana, wrote that he believed that

concrete co-operation in Joint Endeavour [IFOR] will show Russian decision-makers and the Russian public at large that NATO is sincere in its efforts to forge a close relationship with her. In fact it is a cornerstone of Alliance policy in the post-Cold War era that security in Europe can only be achieved with, and not by isolating, Russia.<sup>79</sup>

This is a direct echo of what Holbrooke claimed to be the Clinton administration's belief. But Solana, NATO, and the Clinton administration would later face a dilemma similar to that which they had faced in 1995.

When fighting broke out in Kosovo in 1998 between the Kosovo Liberation Army and Serb forces, NATO and American policy makers thought that they had learnt the lessons of Bosnia, did not want another Rwanda, and again believed that NATO credibility was at stake. They believed that 'diplomacy backed by force' was the answer. Russia again opposed forceful action; not only did Russian diplomats refuse to acknowledge this lesson from Bosnia, but they also argued that Kosovo was a significantly different case.

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<sup>78</sup> Russian Centre for Strategic and International Studies (1997), p. 27.

<sup>79</sup> Solana (1996a).



When it came to a crisis, co-operation in Joint Endeavour made little difference to the Russian belief that NATO was pursuing its own interests in the Balkans and was not sincere in its efforts to forge a close relationship with Russia. This was reinforced by the actual fact of NATO expansion. On 12 March 1999, three former Warsaw Pact members joined NATO. Less than two weeks later, NATO launched air strikes against the FRY and Russia broke off all contacts with NATO.

Co-operation in IFOR had failed to promote Russian-Western partnership because wider NATO policy had not changed, nor had Russia's foreign policy thinking. Even before the 'Primakov era', this had reflected a neo-realist outlook on the part of the dominant policy makers in the Yeltsin administration. It was only in 1992 that Kozyrev and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had espoused a liberal, internationalist approach to foreign policy. This was based on the expectation of a strategic partnership with the West, on the grounds that Russia, as a liberal democratic power, shared similar interests with other liberal democracies. It also incorporated the belief that the leading powers had a duty to work together in international institutions such as the United Nations and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe in order to achieve a just resolution of conflicts such as those in former Yugoslavia. Hence, Russian policy makers supported action by the international community to resolve the conflicts, and the use of such measures of coercion as the imposition of sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The MFA saw Russia's duty as a great power to support these efforts; hence, for example, Russian troops participated in the United Nations' peace-keeping mission in Croatia.

By 1994, the Russian approach had changed to a more assertive course in which it was no longer assumed that Russian and Western interests in relation to the conflicts would coincide. Instead, policy makers emphasised Russia's status as a major European and world power, with significant economic and strategic interests in the Balkans region which might differ from those of the West. They sought to establish Russia's great power credentials, to show that no crisis with global implications, and no major European crisis, could be resolved without Russian participation and without taking Russia's interests into account. In relation to the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, no actions should be taken by other powers contrary to Russia's interests in the Balkans. This perception of direct Russian interests in the region was not clearly formulated, but the administration sought primarily to prevent military action against the Bosnian Serbs.



The shift occurred as a result of a combination of developments in Russia's domestic politics and in wider Russian-Western relations. By 1994, disillusionment with the West over the level of substantive support for the reform process, and the need of the Yeltsin administration to boost its domestic standing particularly after the October 1993 clash with parliament and the elections of December 1993, meant that less priority was placed on partnership with the West and more on achieving domestic consensus. Furthermore, strategic issues were creating tensions between Russia and the West, particularly the United States. Russia's primary aim was to secure for itself a prominent position in an evolved European security structure, and saw NATO as the main threat to this. The Yeltsin administration attempted to restrict NATO's role in the conflicts in former Yugoslavia for a number of reasons: because it would give the organisation a new purpose; it would be *de facto* NATO expansion; it would exclude Russia from international conflict resolution; and NATO was also perceived as being biased against the Serbs.

It was especially the role of NATO and differing views on military action that led to divisions between Russia and Western powers – in particular, the United States – in February 1994 and summer 1995. Nevertheless, Yeltsin and Kozyrev were never prepared to sacrifice wider relations with the West for the sake of the Bosnian Serbs. Although they had shifted from the notion of strategic partnership – with its liberal internationalist connotations – they still believed that Russian-Western co-operation was possible and desirable: for Russia, for the resolution of conflicts, and for the evolving security system.

Hence, whereas in 1992, Russian policy makers emphasised Russia's shared interests with Western liberal democracies in relation to the conflicts, by the beginning of 1994, perceived divergences of interests had come to play a much greater part in Russian policy towards former Yugoslavia. The insistence on Russia's great power status, the attempts to delineate specifically Russian interests in the Balkans, and domestic considerations, meant that Russian policy makers blocked action by the international community that might have averted some of the worst massacres and 'ethnic cleansing' in the conflicts and might have led to an earlier and more just peace.



## Sources and bibliography

### Bibliographical note

#### Western literature

The thesis examines one area of Russian foreign policy after the Cold War, investigating rival foreign policy approaches and the impact of domestic political factors on the formulation of policy. In this context, there are two particularly valuable books: Malcolm *et al* (1996) and Wallander (1996).

The first provides a detailed analysis of internal factors in foreign policy: ideological divisions, institutional competition, electoral politics, and the military. In her chapter on 'Foreign Policy Thinking', Margot Light identifies three groups in the Russian élite on the basis of their foreign policy outlook: 'Liberal Westernizers', 'Pragmatic Nationalists', and 'Fundamentalist Nationalists'. These categories correspond to the labels 'liberal internationalists', 'neo-realists/state centrists', and 'ethnic nationalists' that I have used. Light shows the various stages in the debate leading to the formation of a 'pragmatic nationalist' consensus by summer 1993, and investigates the areas of policy concern that affected this change. Neil Malcolm's chapter on 'Foreign Policy Making' examines the role of the different foreign policy institutions and departments in the formation of foreign policy. Alex Pravda – in the chapter on 'The Public Politics of Foreign Policy' – looks at the domestic factors outside the administration. He links the three foreign policy categories to the three major political groupings on domestic issues: radical reformers, centrists, and radical conservatives, arguing that there was close linkage between domestic and foreign policy outlooks. He examines the impact on foreign policy of political parties, economic groups and lobbies, parliament, and public opinion. Finally, Roy Allison examines 'Military Factors in Foreign Policy', showing the changing influence of the military on foreign policy over time and in different policy areas.

In Wallander (1996), there are particularly useful chapters by Astrid Tuminez on 'Russian Nationalism and the National Interest in Russian Foreign Policy', James Richter on 'Russian Foreign Policy and the Politics of National Identity', and Bruce Porter on 'Russia and Europe After the Cold War: The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policies'. Tuminez identifies four kinds of nationalism in post-Soviet Russia: 'Liberal Nativism' (for example, Solzhenitsyn), 'Westernizing Democracy' (Yeltsin, Kozyrev, Gaidar), 'Statist Nationalism' (Rutskoi, Ambartsumov, Lukin), and 'National



Patriotism' (Ziuganov, Zhirinovskii). Again, these categories correspond to the ones that I have used, with 'National Patriotism' being the ideology of the red-brown coalition – extreme ethnic nationalism or neo-imperialism – and 'Liberal Nativism' emphasising the Slav and Orthodox roots of Russian identity. Tuminez argues that 'Statist Nationalism' has become the dominant élite ideology, as a result of domestic politics, promotion of élite interests, and international developments. Richter points out that the definition of what constitutes the 'nation' affects the conception of 'national interests', and examines the implications; for example, for ethnic nationalists, the rights of ethnic Russians in the 'near abroad' are, by definition, part of Russia's national interests. Porter looks at the various policy outlooks and domestic political competition in the context of practical foreign policy issues for Russia in Europe, such as NATO expansion. He concludes with the argument that liberal reforms can only succeed in Russia if there is a perception that there is minimal external threat; the West can contribute by promoting this perception. Failure to do so could be disastrous:

If Russia's external environment should again become more threatening, it may accelerate the coming to power of anti-Western Eurasianists or, worse, extreme nationalists. Such an eventuality could occur, for example, as the result of mismanaged Western efforts to extend NATO too rapidly or too aggressively to the East. (p. 142)

Porter is interested in the relationship between foreign policy and domestic reform, and this is explored at greater length by Jack Snyder and by Celeste Wallander, who look at the relationship between democratisation and foreign policy. While Snyder warns that democratisation may lead to a more nationalist foreign policy than existed during authoritarian rule, Wallander suggests that Russia's foreign policy may become less predictable, since it is dependent on elections, perceptions of public opinion, and the relationship with parliament, in contrast to the Soviet period.

These books illustrate the rival foreign policy conceptions in the debate in 1992, and explain the development of a consensus around a centrist, neo-realist position. A number of articles also chart this development, particularly in the context of European issues: Adomeit (1995); Crow (17 December 1993) and (6 May 1994); Jonson (1994); MacFarlane (1993) and (1994); Malcolm (1993, chapter on 'New Thinking and After: Debate in Moscow about Europe') and (1994); Rahr (29 May 1992) and (15 February 1995); Simes (1994).

In addition, a number of edited books contain chapters that explore different aspects of Russian foreign policy: Allison and Bluth (1998); Arbatov *et al* (1999); Black



(2000); Clesse and Zhurkin (1997); Dawisha and Dawisha (1995); Galeotti (1995); Kanet and Kozhemiakin (1997); Ra'anani and Martin (1996); Shearman (1995). And there are some books that provide a cohesive survey of Russian policy in general or certain aspects of it, by single or joint authors: Bowker (1996); Buszynski (1996); Cooper (1999); Karaganov (1994); Petro and Rubinstein (1997); Rahr and Krause (1995); Skak (1996); Taylor, T. (1994); Truscott (1997); Webber (1996a).

None of these books has a separate chapter on Russian policy towards the Yugoslav conflicts; instead, it is discussed (if at all) within the context of Russian relations with the West (the United States, Western Europe, and/or NATO), Russian attitudes to peace-keeping, Russia and international institutions, or Russian policy towards Central and Eastern Europe. This is perhaps surprising given the prominence of the Yugoslav issue in the foreign policy debate and the way that the debate over policy towards the conflicts revealed the different outlooks of Russian political forces. The relative neglect of this issue can be explained in part by the concentration on the 'near abroad', which was the most important foreign policy issue. It might also be due to the complexity of the Yugoslav conflicts with which many Russian specialists are perhaps not familiar.

Some exceptions are: Arbatov *et al* (1997), which has a chapter by Nadia Arbatova entitled 'Horror Mirror: Russian Perceptions of the Yugoslav Conflict'; Baranovsky (1996), which again includes a chapter by Arbatova ('The Balkans Test for Russia') and one by F. Stephen Larrabee ('Russia and the Balkans: Old Themes and New Challenges'); Cross and Oborotove (1994), with a chapter entitled 'Balkan Triangle: Washington, Moscow, and Belgrade' by Robin Remington; and Jonson and Archer (1996), including the chapter by Pavel Baev 'The Influence of the Balkan Crisis on Russia's Peacekeeping in its "Near Abroad"'.

The other source of chapters on Russia and the Yugoslav conflicts is surveys of the conflicts themselves, usually edited volumes: Andrei Edemskii 'Russian Perspectives' (a good, clear survey of Russian policy until 1994) in Danchev and Halverson (1996); Danopoulos and Messas (1997), with a chapter by Igor Zevelev and Sharyl Cross entitled 'Moscow and the Yugoslav Secession Crisis'; Paul Goble 'Dangerous Liaisons: Moscow, the Former Yugoslavia, and the West' in Ullman (1996); Pavel Baev 'The Impact on Relations between Western Europe and Russia', in Jopp (1994); and Bianchini and Shoup (1995) contains the chapter "Neopanslavism": Mutuality in the Russian-Serbian Relationship' by Il'ja Levin.



Lukic and Lynch (1996) includes a chapter on Russian policy based on their article (15 October 1993) in *RFE/RL Research Report*. Unfortunately, the chapter only covers until 1993, and over-emphasises the degree of pro-Serb sentiments in the Yeltsin administration at that time (see my discussion of the Vance-Owen plan in chapter 5). Overall, the book does not live up to its title – *Europe from the Balkans to the Urals: the Disintegration of Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union* – which suggests a direct comparison of the break-up of the two states; instead, the issues are dealt with almost in isolation, thus providing separate accounts of the break-up of the Soviet Union and of the SFRY, neither of which adds much to existing literature on the subject.

Several books cover the development of the conflicts and international diplomacy in relation to them. Silber and Little (1996) provides a detailed, chronological survey, complementing the television series *The Death of Yugoslavia* (1995/6) which is based on very useful interviews with most of the leading actors. Glenny (1996) concentrates mainly on the outbreak of war in Croatia. Almond (1994) is a passionate attack on Serb nationalism and Western appeasement, and also places the conflicts in a historical context. Unlike these books, Woodward (1995) offers an account of the dissolution of Yugoslavia more in terms of sociological and economic rather than political factors; but she also investigates international reactions. None of these books has a separate chapter on Russian policy, since they focus on the conflicts themselves and Western responses (which certainly had more impact on the outcome of the conflicts than did Russian policy). Glenny shows an understanding of the balance of domestic factors and concerns over NATO in the formulation of Russian policy after 1992 (see, for example, p. 281); like Woodward, however, he is perhaps insufficiently critical of Russian policy. This cannot be said of Almond, who errs to the other extreme: he sees Russia as embarking on a neo-imperialist policy in the former Soviet Union, and a pro-Serb policy in Yugoslavia, both of which were condoned by Britain in particular.

Gow (1997a) is the most thorough investigation of international diplomacy in relation to the conflicts, and is a persuasive attack on the lack of will on the part of Western policy makers to impose a just settlement, specifically the Vance-Owen plan. Chapter 8 places Russian policy in the context of international diplomacy and compares Russian and American policy; while it provides a good survey of the various factors shaping Russian policy, it perhaps places too much weight on the impact of developments in the conflicts and Western diplomacy – in particular the abandonment of the Vance-Owen plan by America – and not enough on domestic pressure on



Kozyrev and Yeltsin and broader relations between Russia and the West (see my discussion of the Vance-Owen plan in chapter 5).

Finally, there have been some papers or articles covering Russian policy towards the conflicts, published in journals: Bowker (1998); Cohen (1994); several useful analyses by Crow in *RFE/RL Research Report*; Lough (1993a); Parrish, (3 November 1995) and (12 July 1996); Sherr (1996); Sobell (1995).

Although many of these articles or chapters give useful insights into Russian policy – in the context of evolving Russian foreign policy, the domestic debate, relations with the West, and Russia's contribution to conflict resolution in Yugoslavia – they are necessarily too short to provide a comprehensive analysis of Russian policy which examines the relationship between these factors. Most were also written while the conflicts were continuing. This meant that, as well as the accounts being incomplete, some conclusions drawn were not borne out by subsequent developments. For instance, many were written in 1994, after the Sarajevo crisis. The crisis drew attention to Russia's role in conflict resolution and the impact of the Yugoslav conflicts on Russian-NATO relations, but it led to an over-estimation of Russia's importance in international mediation efforts. No detailed analysis of Russian policy over the whole period of the Bosnian and Croatian conflicts has yet been published in the West.

## **Russian literature**

Nor has any book yet been published in Russia on Russian policy towards the conflicts. Interestingly, chapters in collections have tended to be in studies of Russia and the Balkans, Mediterranean, or Black Sea regions, showing that many Russian analysts view these areas as distinct geo-political regions and place the Yugoslav conflicts in this regional context. Hence, Carnegie Moscow Centre (1996) and Iaz'kova *et al* (1995) both contain articles looking at Russian relations with the various Balkan states or Balkans issues in general; and Kovalsky (1998) also includes chapters (by Arbatova and Benediktov) on Russian policy in the Balkans.

Again, there have been a number of articles on Russia and the Yugoslav conflicts published in journals: Arbatova (1995) and (1998b); Romanenko (1996b), (1997b), (1998a); Smirnova (1994); Stepanova (1996); Volkov (1995). Some have appeared in Western journals: Baburkin (1996); Gus'kova (1995a); Kandel' (1996a); Romanenko (1996a); Sorokin (1993). There are also articles or monographs which provide an analysis of the conflicts in a historical context, or in the context of international mediation efforts, not focusing on Russian policy specifically: Gus'kova (1998a);



Leshchilovskaia (1994); Ponomareva and Dikevich (1996); Romanenko (1997a); Ulunian (1999); Utkin (1999); Volkov (1994); Volobuev and Tiagunenko (1997). These demonstrate that there is as wide a range of opinions on the causes of the conflicts and international reaction to them in Russia as there is in the West.

Many of these analyses are useful resources for information on Russian policy towards the conflicts, the causes and course of the conflicts, and international diplomacy. But they also reveal different attitudes within academic circles towards the conflicts and Russian policy. Academics were prominent participants in the foreign policy debate, and I have discussed the rival outlooks particularly in chapters 3 and 4, as well as giving examples elsewhere in the thesis.

## Other sources

Gus'kova (1993) is an invaluable resource, a collection of documents including official statements, parliamentary debates, resolutions, press conferences, appeals, interviews, newspaper articles by academics, journalists, and policy makers. Unfortunately, it ends in May 1993. Gus'kova (1996a) *Jugoslovenska kriza i Rusija: Dokumenti, fakta, komentari (1991-1995)* (in Serbo-Croat) includes the same kind of documents up to May 1995, although there is not much additional material.

For official statements and press conferences, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' *Diplomaticheskii vestnik* has proved very useful. For Duma resolutions and debates, I have used the relevant edition of *Gosudarstvennaia Duma: Postanovleniia i drugie dokumenty* and *Gosudarstvennaia Duma: Stenogramma zasedanii* published by Federal'noe Sobranie – parlament Rossiiskoi Federatsii. I have also used a number of Russian newspapers from across the political spectrum, both as factual resources and as examples of the debate.

For translations of reports by Russian news agencies – *ITAR-TASS*, *Interfax*, etc. – and radio and television broadcasts, I have used mainly the BBC's *Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB)*. *Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* has been very useful as a starting point for identifying interesting articles from Russian newspapers. In particular, Livermore (1994) *Russia's Evolving Foreign Policy 1992-1994: Selections from the Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press* contains a section entitled 'The Yugoslav Conflict: A Test of Russia's Alignment With the West in Europe?'. It was the virulence of the sentiments expressed in these selections that first whetted my appetite for the topic.



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## Documentaries

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